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THE
CHRISTIAN
MINISTER.

By CHARLES BULKLEY. *K*



L O N D O N :

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To be CORRECTED.

P. 12. l. 15. for *semicolon* put *comma* ; p.
46. l. 7. for *Nor* read *Not*. P. 92. l. 5.
instead of the *full stop*. Put a note of inter-
rogation. P. 94. l. 2. after *pietie* put
comma. P. 129. l. 19. after *grasping* read
at. Ib. for *avoiding* read *embracing*.

THE
N A T U R E

AND
D E S I G N

OF THE
Christian Ministrie.

PREACHED

At the ORDINATION

OF

Mr. JOSEPH JEFFRIES,

July 8, 1756, at

PINNERS HALL.

EPHES. IV. II, 12.

And he gave some apostles; and some prophets; and some evangelists; and some pastors, and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministrie, for the edifying of the body of Christ.

I shall not take up your time by making any inquirie at all into the particular nature of those several offices subsisting in the primitive church, that are here specified, under so many different names. It is sufficient for our present purpose, that, according to the expresse words of the apostle, in this very passage itself, they were all of them intended harmoniously to conspire in promoting the same grand purpose of religious edification and moral perfection. There is indeed no mention here made of any particular period, during which any or all of these offices were to continue in the christian church. Yet it is plain from the very nature and design of the christian religion and the end originally proposed to be answered by these several functions, that some of them, at least, were intended by our blessed Savior, and by his apostles acting under his authority, to be exercised, so long as the know-

INTRO-
DUCTION

CHRIS-
TIAN
MINIS-
TRIE

Institution
of it;

designed to
be in perpet-
tual force.

Inferior a-
bilities;

lege and profession of christianitie should remain upon earth. "The edifying of the bodie of Christ, and "the perfecting of the saints," are ends, in the very nature of them commensurate and coæval with the church itself. So long as it shall have a being in the world, there will be the same general necessitie of pursuing them. And therefore so long as the "work of the ministrie" can be carried on, in subserviencie to these designs, as it certainly may by the office of "pastors and teachers" even now, it must, by paritie of reason, have been as much the intention of our blessed Savior and his apostles, that it should be carried on in these latter days, as that it should ever have been engaged in at all. There is apparently the same common reason for applying those severall precepts of the new testament, which injoin a public ministrie in religion, by whatever particular name the office may be denoted, whether that of "pastor, teacher," presbyter, or bishop, to the present period of christianitie, as any of those moral precepts, whatsoever, the obligation of which we all allow to be perpetual and universal.

It seems farther evident, that the persons filling up the severall offices mentioned in the text must have been in very different degrees qualified for that work of the ministrie, which was common to them all.

We

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We can scarce imagine, for what other reason so many distinct offices were introduced into the church, than for this; that persons thus differently qualified might all of them have an opportunitie of employing their severall abilities, in subserviencie to the same general purposes of edification in the faith and morals of the gospel. This distinction, however, will undoubtedly be allowed in preference of the apostles to all the rest of the orders here mentioned.

Theirs was an office, which as it cannot now subsist, so it could not at the time, when it actually did, be equalled in dignitie, or importance, by any other. And from hence, I think it follows, that even in the present day different persons may, with great propriety and honor, engage in the "work of the ministrie," tho' far from being equally well qualified, according to general opinion for discharging the functions of that office. Where there "are diversities of gifts," there may be not only "the same" general "spirit"; but likewise the same general benefits resulting from them all. This can by no means justify any one taking upon him the ministerial character in not endeavoring, to the utmost of his power, to excel in all those qualifications, which naturally tend to fit him for a complete and accurate discharge of the duties of it. But at the same time, it is a reason for our treat-

No necessary exclusion from it.

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Solemn
Entrance
upon it.

ing with great candor, modestie, and respect, those, who may be thought both by ourselves and others, to be much less competently furnished for such an office than we. And this the rather, as such an apprehension, might, upon a nearer inspection, prove to be a very erroneous one. But, however any may be accomplished for executing the several duties belonging to the ministerial function; whether in a superior and more eminent, or only in an inferior and very imperfect degree, nothing can be more evident than the great importance of having them, upon such occasions as these, very seriously and particularly reminded of the nature of these duties. Nothing can be more reasonable, than at such a time to put them upon recollecting the many obligations belonging to the employment, which they have so solemnly undertaken. Nothing more suitable than this to the views of a people voluntarily making choice of them, to "watch over" their societie "in the Lord", and statedly to conduct among them the public exercises of religion, in such a manner; as may most effectually contribute, both to the support and enlargement of their societie in general, and to the improvement of every particular member belonging to it in the knowlege of the gospel, and in a conformitie of life and temper to its principles and laws. I hope there are many, who
have

have experienced the happy effect of proceeding after this manner, upon occasions of the like sort. For surely its natural tendencie is to make the most useful impressions upon the soul, to bring the most interesting reflections into serious remembrance; to throw the mind into a sedate and thoughtful frame, and to excite and invigorate the best and worthiest resolutions in the heart of the person thus devoting himself to the "work of the ministrie." And from what is now to be delivered concerning the nature of this office, you, my brethren, the members of this societie, may easily collect, what is to be your conduct towards the minister you have chosen; with what habitual views, and with what kind of temper you are to attend upon his services among you. This, I hope, is what you will be thinking of, as I go along; tho' it comes not within my province at present, to enlarge upon, or so much as to mention any thing of the kind.

The words, which have been already recited from St. Paul's epistle to the Ephesians appeared to me extremely proper to be discoursed upon, in order to answer the general purposes, that have now been pointed out. And they seem evidently to contain in them the following observations or propositions; which therefore, I shall endea-

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vor, as well as I am able, distinctly to illustrate and improve.

THE NA- First, the whole christian church is here
TURE compared to a bodie.

AND CON- Secondly, it is for very emphatical and
STITUTI- important reasons stiled the bodie of Christ
himself.

ON OF THE Thirdly, it is a bodie wanting to be edi-
fied.

CHRIS- Fourthly, the very end and design of the
TIAN christian ministrie is to promote its edi-
fication.

CHURCH.

Comparison
of it to a hu-
man body.

First, the whole christian church is here compared to a bodie. A very expressive and beautiful similitude; and one, that suggests a varietie of reflections peculiarly well suited to the design of our present meeting. Thus, for instance,

Its vital, u-
niting prin-
ciple.

In the first place it plainly implies, that there is some common principle, by which christians, of all denominations, and in every part of the world, are united; a principle somewhat analogous to that vital one, by which the various members of the human bodie are connected, so as to form one animal system. Now this common principle of union among christians, according to the account, that is very frequently given us in the new testament, is no other than a belief, that Jesus Christ is the great and most illustrious prophet of God; a prophet who came into the world by the appointment

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pointment of the supreme Deitie, and to whom God has "borne witness" by the clear evidence of miraculous operations, to establish a religious institution intended for the general benefit of mankind and in the best manner adapted for promoting the salvation of their immortal souls. And indeed this is what naturally occurs to our thoughts, as the only uniting or connecting principle of the christian bodie. No man, who does not believe this article so much as pretends to call himself a christian. And, if he does believe it, no other man has a right to say, that he is not one. In this article it is, that all christians are in fact agreed. But if we attempt to go one step farther in making fundamentals, instead of settling the true notion or idea of a Christian church, we shall only spend our time in unchristianising one another. Under the animating influence of this general principle, every particular member of the christian bodie is to contribute all he can towards promoting the general interest and welfare of it. He is to represent, as he has opportunitie, the evidences, the design, the doctrines of christianitie in such a view, as will make them to appear "worthy of all acceptation"; and to adorn it by an exemplarie and useful life. Christian ministers especially are to make it the habitual aim of their preaching, of their conversation, of their life in

FUNDAMENTALS.

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the general tenor of it, to be the defenders of our common faith. They are to exhibit in the strongest point of view, the noble design and admirable structure of the christian plan, the beautie and symmetrie of all its parts, and their conspiring tendencie to refine and to exalt the soul of man, to impress the image of God upon his human offspring, to promote peace and universal tranquillitie here upon earth, and to train us up for the mansions of eternal joy. Again,

Factions
Spirit in
Religion;

Secondly; when the apostle represents the whole christian world, as constituting but one bodie, does he not clearly point out the inconsistency of a dividing, factious partie-spirit, with the nature and genius of the gospel? does he not by this representation cut off at once the most plausible of all those pretences, by which to the unspeakable detriment, and almost intire ruin, of the christian cause, such a spirit has been encouraged. The christian church, we see, is a bodie. Let us then, if you please, ascribe to any particular sect or denomination in it, that honor, for which they all contend; the honor of being the head of this bodie, or that part of it, which is most of all dignified by the puritie of their sentiments, and the exact conformitie of their peculiar tenets to the original and primitive standard

The Abstr
dic.

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standard of evangelical faith. Yet still would it not be very absurd for the head to say to any of the other members of the human body, even to those, which are at the greatest distance from it; "I will have no communion with you"? what however can be more like this, than the excommunication of those christians, whose sentiments concerning this or that particular doctrine or principle of christianitie we do not apprehend to be so pure and genuine as our own; and that on account of this difference only? From this dividing spirit, when carried to its utmost height, have proceeded the most tremendous evils; animosities and rancor of affection, contentions, tumults, bloodshed and murder. And is there not some reason to suspect, that a spirit thus pernicious, when grown to its maturitie and operating in the fullness of its strength, cannot be of a very harmless nature even in the seeds and first principles of it? Indeed I scarce know how to form a better wish in behalf of a minister, better for himself, or better for his people, than, that he may not have the least tincture of it in him. It will be apt, when once indulged, to insinuate itself imperceptibly, and to be continually acquiring a deeper influence in the mind. And what is its direct and apparent tendencie, but to contract at once both the under-

Malignities;

Growth.

Mischievous,
tendencie

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standing and the affections? And should a minister once give way to it, who can foresee, what temptations it may lay him under to corrupt the worship, the ordinances, and the truth of God? It may strongly incline him to tamper with the principles of religion, for the sake of accommodating them the better to his parties. It may make him backward to insist upon such topics, however important in themselves, that may seem most incompatible with them. And it may be the means of inducing him, even in what immediately relates to the social exercises of religion; to regard the support and credit of the particular interest he has espoused, much more than is consistent with that simplicitie of intention, that ought ever to accompanie our solemn acts of devotion.

Once more, in the third place, Saint Paul by comparing the christian church to a bodie points out very clearly and expressively the vast importance, not only of avoiding external rents and divisions in the church of Christ, but of cherishing the sincerest and warmest principles of an enlarged benevolence in the heart. This is what alone can answer in the christian bodie to the harmonic and mutual subservience of parts so apparent in the animal one. And it is easily perceived by conversing

versing with the sacred oracles, that, as a
 belief in Jesus Christ, as the Son of God, Fundamen-
tal SPIRIT
 and the great prophet of the "most high," is of the gospel
 the fundamental doctrine, so benevolence, Christian be-
nevolence ;
 universal benevolence is the fundamental
 spirit of the gospel. It is declared by Saint
 Paul to be the very "end of the com-
 mandment", or christian institution ; to
 be the best and most excellent of all en-
 dowments, preferable to faith, to hope,
 to knowledge, to the power of working
 miracles, and even to the magnanimitie
 and resolution of martyrdom itself. He pro-
 nounces it, in perfect agreement with our Its Nature ;
 natural ideas or notions of such a princi-
 ple, to be comprehensive of all our moral
 obligations. Accordingly Saint John, in
 one of his epistles, makes it to be the very
 test of conversion. "By this we know,
 "that we have passed from death to life,
 "because we love the brethren". Nay,
 our Savior himself has assured us, that, if
 we "give alms of such things as we have,"
 thereby intending to specify the general
 principle of benevolence, "all things are
 clean unto us". And undoubtedly in
 this declaration he meant to say, that
 our actions, if this be the predominant
 principle from which they flow, are pure
 and acceptable in the sight of God. Ac-
 cording to this representation or gospel-ac-
 count

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Importance.

count of the nature, extent and power of charity or universal benevolence, there can be neither religion nor moralitie in any action farther than it is dictated by such a principle. There may be in it, specious appearances, selfish prudence and worldly wisdom, but neither moral virtue, nor evangelical obedience. This is an affection of mind, not to be spoken of, merely as an ornamental, or endearing quality, tho' these are recommendations of it by no means to be forgotten; but as the animating spirit, the sum and substance, the "alpha" and "omega" of practical religion and christian dutie. The cherishing and improving of this temper, is to be the grand purpose and ultimate aim of a christian minister. He is to be far from satisfying himself with telling his people in cold and general terms; that they must be charitable and benevolent and love one another. He is not to be content with declaiming upon this virtue on particular occasions only. But, whatever subject he treats of, its relation to such a principle must be pointed out. He must shew in particular, that it is a principle most closely and intimately connected with the love of God. He must insist upon it again and again, that if any man pretending to "love God," does nevertheless "hate his brother," that is, does not sincerely love him;

him; his brother in humanitie, his brother in the gospel, "he is a lyar". He must endeavor thoroughly to convince them, that as God is a being of infinite benevolence, that as this his most resplendent and lovely attribute is the only just or natural ground of our delight and complacencie in him, it must be utterly impossible for any one to have a proper reverence and esteem for the supreme Deitie or this complacencie in his perfections, who is not himself possessed of a disposition, that is truly friendly and benevolent. In short, a minister ought to remember, that this is a point, upon which he cannot lay too great a stress. nor need he be in the least afraid of exalting such a temper beyond it's real importance. But then he must be extremely careful to form the general strain of his discourses so, as to shew the very sufficient reason, that there is in truth and nature, and in the authoritie of the christian institution, for laying such a stress upon it. He must represent it as a conformitie to the supreme law of our own minds, as an imitation of the divine character, as our necessarie meetness for the heavenly happiness. He must shew the influence, which it will certainly have, according to the degree of its prevalence in the heart, over all our thoughts, our desires, our inclinations, our appetites, our pursuits,

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pursuits, our words, our actions, our hopes, our fears. He must delineate it in all its lovely attitudes, in every alluring form. He must demonstrate the power and efficacy of it by just and pertinent examples; but, more especially, and with the greatest exactness, by that of our most gracious and compassionate redeemer. Whatever doctrine or principle he treats of, he must display the tendencie of it to encourage such an affection, and urge with proper vehemence and zeal whatever motive, such a doctrine or principle affords as an inducement to the cultivation of it. By this means every sermon he preaches will be, as it ought to be, in effect and in one view or another, a charitie-sermon; but yet very sufficiently diversified in its topics and phraseology. For this is a subject, that is never to be exhausted. But

Charitie-
Sermon.

Bodie of
Christ:

Christian
Church;

Why called
so.

Secondly, the christian church is, with peculiar emphasis and for very important reasons styled by the apostle in our text "the bodie of *Christ*". It is that societie, of which he is the head. And this pre-eminence in it he "purchased" at no less a rate, than by "his blood". It is that societie, which he came from heaven on purpose to erect; and for the sake of which he went through such various scenes of humiliation and reproach, while here on earth.

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earth. It is a societie, that derives all its privileges and honors, all its dignitie and perfection, from the tenderness of his compassion, and the fulness of his benevolence; and which subsists intirely and alone, upon the foundations, that were originally laid by him, as the "author and finisher of our faith". It is a societie, in which he is not only the vital, but the authoritative head; the laws and ordinances of which, together with all their sanctions were completely settled and promulgated by himself, at the original institution of it. A societie therefore it is, in which there can be no room for the exercise of any other jurisdiction. From all which it immediately and necessarily follows, that it is a societie intirely founded upon religious and spiritual views; this being the only notion, that we can possibly form of it from the declarations of its institutor himself, of its supreme and only lawgiver. You will easily perceive, that these are considerations peculiarly well fitted both for animating and directing the ministers of the christian church in fulfilling the duties of their office. If the church, in which they labor is the body of Christ; a societie, which that incomprehensibly great and glorious Son of God came into the world on purpose to form and to establish; its interests

Principles
deducible
from that
view of it.

Minister;

instructed;

animated.

His office,
not autho-
ritative,
or magistra-
tical.

interests cannot be of a trifling nature. On the contrary they must certainly claim the warmest exertions of our zeal. And how must it needs be invigorated by considering, that we are acting in concert with so great and so exalted a being? how must it endear to us the cause, which it is the grand design and sole business of our station to support, to recollect, that it is the cause of our own most merciful redeemer, and of that most amiable and benevolent Savior of mankind, who thought no difficulties too great to encounter, no sorrows too deep to be endured, no condescensions too low to be submitted to for the sake of promoting their immortal happiness?

Again, if the christian church be the bodie of Christ, or that societie, of which he is the sole lawgiver and head, and constituted such by the appointment of the supreme father and God of the universe, what can be more insolent, than for those who call themselves his ministers, that is, his servants, to assume to themselves a partnership in his authoritie, and to enact in it laws of their own, which they would have to be altogether as obligatorie as any, that even Christ himself has enjoined? Let us then always remember, that we are ministers, and not magistrates, in the church of Christ; that we have "no dominion"

over

over mens consciences, but that our only office is to be "helpers of their joy". And let it be our care to conduct ourselves in all our public services, and throughout the general tenor of our conversation, with that meekness and modestie, with that lowliness and humilitie of spirit, which this consideration naturally dictates, as being so highly sutable to the character we assume.

Farther still; if the christian church be the bodie of Christ, that societie, which he came into the world to erect, which has by him been completely framed and modeled, and in which he is the sole legislator; this immediately suggests to us the proper manner of proceeding in our attempts to promote its interest and prosperitie. In what other manner can we consistently attempt this, than by recuring to the original constitution of it as delineated in the gospel, by forming an intimate acquaintance with its genius and design, with the views and principles, upon which it was introduced into the world, with its laws and maxims, and with the nature of those sanctions, by which they have been enforced? And we shall be much mistaken, if we hope to acquire a sufficient knowlege in these particulars by looking only now and then into the new testament, or by reading it over with

Interest of
the christian
Church,

How pro-
moted.

Dignitie and
grandeur of
the gospel-
scheme.

with a transient and superficial eye. The gospel is a scheme full of dignitie and meaning. And it would be the greatest affront offered to the majestic of heaven, to think that a plan of so interesting and extensive a nature, formed in the counsels of eternal wisdom, should be understood by as little application of mind or exertion of our intellectual powers, as some familiar storie or common tale. Yet I would not be thought to speak of it, as a dark, intricate, mysterious scheme of principles. It calls for assiduitie in the studie of it, not because of its obscuritie, but because of its importance. Like all other grand and noble objects its beautie and magnificence are not to be apprehended at a single glance, but require a close and accurate inspection and a mind exerting some answerable strength and greatness of thought in the survey of it.

SCRIPTURES.

METHOD of
studying
them proposed.

And here, Sir, give me leave to lay before you, what I apprehend to be the best method of studying the scriptures, so far as my own experience has carried me in this matter. It would, I think, very much derogate from the wisdom of the gospel scheme, which was intended for the benefit of mankind in general, to imagine, that the most interesting and important parts of them are not to be understood, without

without the aid of learning. It is with respect only to the more extraneous and least essential, that this assistance can be absolutely necessarie. Religion and moralitie are the capital points treated of in these sacred oracles, and those, to which a minister, in the studie of them, is to direct his ultimate and most ardent attention. Now for the understanding of any writings, which chiefly insist upon such subjects as these, we are in the original frame and structure of the human mind supplied with very ample powers. And the more these primitive seeds of knowlege are cultivated by the diligent and impartial exercise of our own reason upon every topic of religion and of morals, the better shall we be able to understand the bible. This therefore is the principal thing to be attended to by a minister, in order to his acquiring a deep and intimate acquaintance with the meaning of the sacred writings and the spirit of the evangelical system. The very end of the gospel was to promote the prevalence and dominion of pietie and virtue in the heart of man. This is that "kingdom of God," which it was designed to erect "within" us. To studie these therefore, in their first principles, and in the whole extent of their obligations, is to studie christianitie. Think freely

Learning.

Religion.

Morals.

Thinking.

freely, think closely, think chearfully, think copiously upon every subject of religion, and you will soon find your understanding enlightened and irradiated with a knowledge of the scriptures far beyond what can ever be attained by consulting only the commentaries of others, with an unanimated spirit, that has never exerted its own faculties in these delightful speculations.

By all means, Sir, cultivate an acquaintance with the languages in which the scriptures were originally written. This will often save you the trouble of searching thro' a number of commentators for the sense of a single passage, perhaps of a single word, as well as the frequent disappointment of doing it to no purpose. Upon many such occasions you will be able to solve your difficultie at once by consulting only the original at hand. By this means likewise you will be able to discover in particular passages of the sacred writings, such a sublime, vigorous and extensive meaning, as oftentimes lies hid under the impropriety of a version. But still there is another original of much greater importance in order to the understanding of these "lively oracles", the most interesting parts of them however, than even the original language, in which the books either of the old or the new testament have been

ORIGINAL

Text;

System.

been written. I mean the original system of morals and religion as founded upon the principles of reason and of nature. To explain and illustrate, to recommend and enforce this very system, was the ultimate design of christianitie. And it is these principles only, that can supplie us with any certain test or criterion, by which to judge of the sense of a miraculous revelation. To "the law" of nature therefore, and to the "testimonie" of reason we must finally appeal, when about to examine, how far such or such an interpretation given to any particular passage of reveled scripture is consonant to the perfections of God, the supreme reveler. So that a man might as well shut his eyes, in order to read over the words, in which the gospel revelation is expressed, as renounce the use of his own reason in matters of religion, and then hope to understand the sense of it. And, on the other hand, he, who has acquired a deep and penetrating knowlege of natural religion in its various principles and obligations, of the force of its laws and energie of its maxims, will be able to form a much higher idea of the excellencie and admirable tendencie of the sacred and evangelical writings, than it is possible in any other way to attain. Such a one will be able to discern the true meaning and the beautie of particular

Natural
Religion.

Literary
aid.

cular passages occurring in these writings in a manner very much independent upon the formalitie and apparatus of learned criticism. And yet so far will his acquaintance with the original principles of religion, as founded in nature, so far, will it be from inclining him to throw any contempt upon literary acquisitions, that he will by this very means see the importance of them more distinctly, be furnished with more inspiring motives to pursue them, and be better qualified for making a proper use of them, in the service of christianitie, and for the illustration of the holy scriptures. He, who can best understand these scriptures without the aid of learning, is the man, who, of all others, will profit most by it in the studie of them. Besides, it is a matter of high and principal moment in acquiring a thorough knowlege of the scriptures, to be as familiarly acquainted as possible with the ancient authors of Greece and Rome. And this, not so much for the sake of criticising upon words and phrases, tho' this should be made a secundarie end and will easily accompanie that more important one of forming an intimacie with their religious and moral sentiments. The representations, which they have given us of these subjects, will be frequently found to illustrate in the strongest manner imaginable,

Ancient au-
thors.

British.

Composi-
tions.
Subjects.

imaginable, the beautie and energie of those we meet with in the scriptures. And with the same view I would recommend the frequent perusal of our own english divines and practical authors, who lived in the last centurie, especially from about the middle of it to the end; together with severall who wrote at the beginning of the present. Their writings, by the sublime sentiments they contain, by the exalted views they continually exhibit of the pious and moral temper, cannot but greatly contribute to the establishing of our judgment in the true notion or system of religion. And can we have a better help than this towards the understanding of the scriptures? Nor is this all. In these writings there will be found a very great number of passages cited from the old and new testament; and illustrated, perhaps in a manner much more satisfactorie, than by any interpretation of them, that is to be met with in the professed annotators upon the bible. To these by all means should be added many very valuable authors in the same species of writing of the present day. In short all strong, nervous compositions upon divine and moral subjects, whether pagan or christian, whether of the primitive or of the later church, should be diligently

C

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Self-
diffidence.

Sense.

Commen-
tator.

gently and familiarly studied, in order to the improving of ourselves in the knowledge of christianitie. These are the very subjects treated of in the gospel itself. Certainly then it must be by conversing with such writings as these, that we shall enter more and more into the spirit and meaning of it. Another thing, that I will venture to recommend to you in the studie of the holy scriptures, is, not to be too diffident of your own abilitie for finding out the meaning of any particular passage or portion of it. If the psalmists, prophets, apostles, and evangelists really wrote sense, as most assuredly they did, it cannot, one would think, be so extremely difficult a matter, as some seem to imagine, for a man of sense, by attending only to their expression and manner of writing, to understand their meaning, in whatever is of highest moment and most worthie of being understood. Never therefore conclude too hastily with respect to any passage of this kind, that it is not to be understood without having recourse to a commentator. Think not of applying immediately to this foreign aid. But previously trie, whether you cannot explain it for yourself. If you can, a good deal of trouble will be spared. And if you find, that you cannot, it will be time enough to consult the commentator then.

Whereas,

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Whereas, if you make your first application there, you will possibly meet with some cold, insipid interpretation of the passage, with which, it may be, you will be content; when perhaps by a little thought and meditation you might have found out a much better of your own. Some lively, efficacious meaning might have offered itself to your reflection, which, unless you pursue this method, may be for ever veiled from your eyes. I say not these things with any view of derogating from the merit of those labors, which have by so many pious, learned and ingenious men been employed in commenting upon sacred scripture. But the more you exercise your own thought and judgment in searching into the sense of it, the better use you will be able to make of their assistance. By following this course likewise you will greatly improve and strengthen your own understanding. Whereas by depending intirely upon anothers, your faculties will be apt to contract a kind of rust, and an inability for exerting themselves in their proper sphere. It is going a great way towards finding out the sense of any particular passage of scripture to determine, what is not the sense of it. And this you will easily do, by having previously laid that foundation in the studie of natural religion, of

Meditation.

THE CHRISTIAN MINISTER.

Observa-
tion.

Love of
religion ;
and a practi-
cal delight
in it.

which we have already spoken. Another thing, that will greatly contribute towards throwing a light upon the sacred scriptures, is the making diligent observations upon the temper, habits, views and behavior of mankind, in the several conditions of life ; and particularly upon your own. It is of these very things the scripture treats. And the more experience you acquire in relation to them, the more accurately by far will you be able to understand it. But after all, neither knowlege, nor learning, neither observation, nor experience, will be of much avail towards leading you into “ the “ secret of the Lord” as contained in these inestimable writings, unless accompanied with a real love of religion, with a practical delight in contemplating the truths of it, and an ardent desire of having all your affections more completely regulated, purified and refined by its maxims. This will enable you daily to discover new beauties, and before unthought of excellencies in these venerable records. And by this means your acquaintance with the sense and meaning of them will be not so much the effect of formal pains, as the immediately resulting consequence of having a mind fraught with virtue and addicting itself with inexpressible pleasure to every exercise of it. So true is that maxim of the psalmist,

psalmist, that "the law of the Lord enlightens the eyes", as well as "rejoices the heart". But it is time we should go on to the

Third observation contained in the text, and that is, that the church or the bodie of Christ stands in need of being edified.

EDIFICA-
TION.

"For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministrie, for the edifying of the body of Christ." As saint Paul

here compares the christian church to a bodie, so he elsewhere compares the bodie itself to a house. And this is the reason of

Metaphor
explained.

his speaking both in the text and in other places of the edification of the bodie or church of Christ. As an infant is to be

builded up into a man by food and nourishment and exercise, just so is the church of Christ to be edified or builded up by

the food of the divine word and the exercises of religion. For where is that individual belonging to it, who is already arrived at the maturitie of his christian graces?

Different.

To whatever heights of virtue any of our hearers may at present have attained, yet are they to be made sensible, that there

Classet

have been many things omitted in their past life, which ought to have been done, and many things done, which ought to

in the

have been omitted; and that there are improvements still to be made by the noble

Moral
Temper.

and capacious powers of the human mind, which they are as yet very far from having reached. But then besides these, there are others, who, tho' they assume the form of godliness, have scarce attained to any thing in religion beyond it. So far are they from being arrived to the height, that they have scarce been initiated into the very rudiments of virtue. And yet these are persons very apt to be extremely well satisfied with themselves, and with the supposed perfection of their own tempers, for no other reason, but, because they abstain from vices that are publicly scandalous, and attend sometimes with as much heedlessness and indifference of mind, as can well be imagined, upon the social exercises of devotion.

Spiritual
Life ;

Its Sublimity ;

A minister therefore is to make it his business to explain the divine laws of religion and moralitie in their utmost puritie and in their fullest extent. He is to point out the sublimitie and perfection of the truly christian and spiritual life in the most forcible and convincing terms. He is to shew the influence, that the religious and virtuous temper will have upon all the powers and upon every affection of the human mind, in the various and almost infinitely diversified circumstances of human life. And, on the other hand, he is frequently to paint the malignitie of sin in the strongest colors,

Influence.
Vice ;
Its Malignitie.

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colors, and distinctly to point out the great varietie, that there is in the kinds or species of it. Not one of his hearers is he to suffer, if any pains of his can prevent it, to fall into that frequently fatal delusion of concluding himself to be a man of fair, uncorrupted morals, merely on account of his freedom from one or two particular vices. The horrors and the aggravations of moral guilt are to be laid open, as it appears either in selfishness or sensuality, in injustice, or in idleness, as well as in those diabolical shapes, which it sometimes wears, of pride, censoriousness, ingratitude, envy and revenge. And at the same time that we dissuade our hearers from these and all other vices, we must urge it upon them to aspire after the greatest dignitie and perfection of internal character, by everie possible argument, that can be deduced, either from the principles of natural religion or the peculiarities of the gospel-scheme. I say, of natural religion. For I hope you will not upon any consideration whatsoever, decline the insisting frequently, and at large upon the proofs of religion, arising from the light of nature, and amounting to such a clear and satisfactorie demonstration in favor of it. Religion cannot be too firmly supported

Various

and

horrid

Species

of it.

Moral Character ;

Dignitie
and
perfection
of it.

Religion ;

Double Se-
curitie
of it.

ported. And if God himself has founded it upon "two immutable things," shall any of us affect to be wiser than he? shall we attempt to weaken its foundations by resting it intirely upon one? But I procede to the

END of the
Christi: a
Ministrie.

Fourth, and last of those observations, which we mentioned, as being contained in the words of the text, and which we proposed at this time to discourse upon. It was, you may remember, that the promoting that edification of the christian bodie of which we have been speaking, is the very end and design of the christian ministrie. This is a representation so just and natural, that, instead of enlarging upon it, I shall at present take it for granted; chusing rather upon this occasion, to insist on those useful inferences, that we may collect from such a view of the nature and design of the ministerial office, and then to hint at some of those dispositions of mind or virtuous endowments, which, according to this view of it, are peculiarly necessarie, in order to our discharging it aright.

Its Difficul-
ties.

As to the first of these particulars. This edification of our people is to be attempted, and, if possible, to be effected, in opposition to very strong and deep-rooted prepossessions, to inveterate habits, to great wilfulness and perverseness, to thoughtlessness and inattention, and, in more instances

per-

perhaps than is generally apprehended, to the grossest ignorance, with respect to the first principles of religion, to the very end and design of it. Our endeavor, in pursuance of such an attempt, must be to rivet in mens minds such solid and substantial maxims of virtue, as shall render them superior to everie possible temptation. It must be to guard their innocence, to ensure their integritie, to exalt their pietie. And is there not much to be done in preparing materials proper for attaining these ends? Will it not call for much pains and labor to acquire the habit of throwing these materials into the most persuasive and alluring form? And how difficult must it be, amidst the necessarie avocations and cares of life, to keep ourselves at all times in a proper frame for carrying on the devotional exercises belonging to our office? These are the most sacred branches of our public service, and from the regular and just performance of them, almost all, that the most fervent and animated pietie can wish for, may with reason be expected. When we lay these several particulars together, how can we forbear to crie out; "who is sufficient for these things?" But this we should do, not in the language of despair, but of manly resolution and of god-like ambition; in the zeal and earnest desire of

Consequen-
ces
arising
from a
view
of
them,

Devotional
Exercises,

THE CHRISTIAN MINISTER.

Integritie.

our hearts, to be as useful, as possible, in promoting the welfare and everlasting happiness of our people. Again; the fixing our eye very attentively upon the nature and design of our office, according to the view given of it in the text, may be a happy means of preserving our integritie in the discharge of it. And, if this be indeed maintained, how little success soever we may have in saving the souls of others we shall at least “deliver our own.” If ever we feel any rising inclination to accomodate our ministerial services to the support of this or that favored partie, or to the false taste of any particular friend or acquaintance, the attending to the true nature and design of our office will remind us of that reflection of saint Paul, which we ought indeed to have habitually upon our hearts; “if I seek to please men I cannot be the servant of Christ.” It will put us upon asking ourselves in such a case; are the persons, whom I am thus disposed to gratifie, to be my judges hereafter? does my acceptance in the sight of God depend upon their good opinion of me? if, for the sake of pleasing them, I falsifie the word of God, and renounce my integritie, can they make me amends? This view likewise of the nature and design of our office in general, when properly impressed upon

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Improve-
ment.

on the mind, will be perpetually suggesting to us a great variety of useful hints, in relation to the most successful method of conducting the several parts of it. These we shall always diligently attend to, nor fail to pursue, so far as farther reflection may approve them. And, to add no more under this particular, does not such a representation, as this, of the nature and design of the ministerial office place it in a very honorable light? must it not then afford us very ample encouragement to pursue the duties of it, with integrity and faithfulness, notwithstanding all the difficulties, which upon the same view of it so naturally occur to our reflection? If the sole end of our employment be the religious and moral improvement of mens minds and temper, and their preparation for eternal felicity, can we conceive of any, that could have had more of dignity in it, or been more acceptable to a truly generous ambition? is there any scene of action, in which we could have had a fairer opportunity for exercising some of the most heroic virtues? is not this the office of some of the most exalted heavenly spirits? was it not for these very ends that our gracious redeemer himself became an inhabitant of earth? Nay, is it not the main and ultimate design of the divine providence itself, as exercised in

Honori

THE CHRISTIAN MINISTER:

the present world, to train men up for the immortal joys of that, which is to come?

And, now, secondly, and as the conclusion of the whole, let me point out in a few words, some of those dispositions of mind or virtuous qualities, which seem peculiarly necessarie, in order to our pursuing the duties of this so honorable employment with acceptableness and success. And,

Self-denial.

In the first place it seems evident, that one, who devotes himself to the work of the ministrie should be a man of great self-denial. It is impossible to discharge with fidelitie the severall duties we have been speaking of, without abridging ourselves of many of those amusements and pleasures, which nevertheless our particular education and taste, or else the general vogue and fashion of the world, may dispose us to indulge. But a minister may have other reasons for self-denial. I could heartily wish, that many of the dissenting denomination in particular were more plentifully provided for, than they are by their respective congregations. But if this either cannot or will not be done, there is still an expedient left. And that is to bring the mind into a state of contentment with a little. This will happily exclude a great varietie of worldly cares and perplexities. And it will lay a very natural foundation for that elevation of spirit, and dignitie of thought and

Elevation of
Spirit.

and sentiment, which we should be ever studying to acquire. Nor do I know of any thing, that is more likely to compose our hearts into this contented frame, than the addicting ourselves as closely as possible to the peculiar duties of our station. In the pursuit of our studies, if we pursue them aright, in the cultivation of our own minds, in the improvement of our own affections, we shall find inexpressibly greater pleasure, than is ever to be hoped for, from the vain and trifling amusements of the world. And by this means we shall be so far from regretting our inability to engage in them, that we shall have no inclination to do it, if we could. But this leads me to observe in the

Second place, that from the account, that has been given of the nature and design of the ministerial office, it plainly appears, that, whoever undertakes it, should be a man of great industrie and application. When Grotius inquired of the person, to whom he had committed the care of his son's education, into the character of the youth; his question was; "does he love labor?" He knew, that he would make no proficiency, if he did not. And sure, I am, that if a man does not "love labor," he is so far very unfit for being a minister of the gospel. And, if he does "love" it, it will soon cease to be "labor." For you may

Affiduitie;

venture

venture to lay it down as a maxim, that the more you studie, the easier your work will be. It will proportionably enlarge your views, strengthen your faculties, expand your invention, elevate and invigorate your affections. And on all these accounts, diligence and assiduitie in the discharge of our office, will render the necessarie labors of it not only easy but delightful. And when once the spirit of industrie is become habitual to the mind of one who undertakes it, it will put him upon every expedient of redeeming his precious time, and incline him to look upon those, as the worst of robbers, who would rob him of that. He will dread the thought of wasting the important hours of life in unnecessarie indulgences, idle amusements, frivolous companie, or vain, impertinent visits. In reference however to this last particular a minister of the gospel is to remember the obligation he lies under to visit his people, in order to ingratiate himself into their affections by his affable and courteous conversation, to administer to them the comforts of religion in their distresses, to have an opportunitie of discerning both the excellencies and defects of their respective characters, to enter into free and familiar discourse with them upon the subject of religion, and thus to gain such an insight into their taste and sentiments, their views and

Views.

Invention.

Affections.

Time.

Visiting.

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and inclinations, as will be greatly assisting to him in his public services. These visits likewise may be very happily improved as an opportunitie of conveying the most useful instructions into the minds of children and the younger part of a familie. And perhaps, upon some occasions, the addressing ourselves more immediately to these may be the properest method of suggesting some very pertinent hints to the elder. Once more in the

Third place it appears from all that has been said, that a minister had need to be a man of great resolution. If he strictly adheres to that tenor of life, which best suits with the nature of his office, he must live in an almost perpetual contradiction to the fashion and custom, to the taste and relish of the world; and meet perhaps with the most unkind and cruel opposition, from those, with whom he may be connected in the very nearest relations of life. He will have numerous and daily temptations to encounter; at least, till by the force of unwearied resolution he has at length subdued them; and is able to say in the language of triumphant faith; I "can do all things thro' Christ, who strengtheneth me." In the language, I say, of triumphant faith. For nothing can so effectually contribute to his acquiring this necessary disposition, as the forming a most intimate

Resolution;

Fashion;

Connections;

NHT

intimate

Reference
of the soul
to God.

Example.

Corinth
1201

intimate acquaintance, with the realitie and power of religion, the refering himself intirely and chearfully to God, and making it his highest ambition to please and resemble him. And that we may fix our minds in a steady adherence to the best and worthiest maxims of behavior we might do well to be frequently conversing with the written lives and characters of those, whether ministers or others, who have most of all distinguished themselves, in prosecuting the several duties both of their general profession as christians, and of their particular situations in life. These examples will both enlighten and animate. They will dignifie and enlarge your views, with respect to the nature of your christian and ministerial obligations. You cannot but contemplate them with admiration. You cannot but have your thoughts by this means directed, to that exalted bliss, with which such illustrious virtue is now rewarded in the everlasting kingdom of heaven. You cannot but conceive a very high idea of the sublime satisfaction, which men of this character enjoyed even in the present world, richly compensating all the fatigues they underwent, or difficulties they had to struggle with. And such reflections will be so many urging monitors accrossing you, in the language of our blessed Savior, upon another occasion; "go and do thou likewise."

THE

THE
USEFULNESS
AND
HONOR
OF THE
Christian Ministrie.

PREACHED

At the OLD JEWRY,

March 5, 1755.

Being the Day of ANNUAL COLLECTION

FOR THE

WIDOWS FUND.

I T H E S S. V. 12, 13.

And we beseech you, brethren, to know them, who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them very highly in love for their works sake. *And* be at peace among yourselves.

THE liberal disposition, which you are so well known to bring along with you upon these occasions, and which has been for so many years advancing towards a confirmed, immutable habit, may seem to render it altogether unnecessary, that you should now be reminded in any direct or formal manner of those considerations, that so powerfully and forcibly recommend the principal design of our present meeting. Such an attempt may even carry in it some slight appearance of suspecting that generositie, which we ought to applaud. Yet farther reflection will leave us at no

INTRO-
DUCTION

Generous
Temper

Incentives

to it.

Necessitie

of

proposing

QUESTION

them;

ANSWER

loss to discern the propriety and usefulness of these annual exhortations, as well as of this your annual collection; and of urging the motives of christian charity even upon those, whom, we believe, to be come hither on purpose to embrace one of the fairest opportunities, that can easily occur for the exercise of it. Some of the best designs, and which for a while have been highly prosperous and flourishing, have at length failed and sunk into ruin for want of having those principles, upon which they were at first established, duly cherished, and invigorated afresh. Good and useful schemes, however happily begun, will by no means support themselves, without farther measures taken on our part for their stability and success. It is only by the abiding energy of the same animating spirit, which gave rise to them, that they can be held up, even to that degree of perfection, in which they first appeared. And we might as well believe, that great and beneficial undertakings, generous plans for public usefulness and extensive good, have had their beginning from some strange, mysterious, unaccountable enchantment, without the preceding purpose of any conscious, active mind, as that they should retain their consistence and their vigor, and go on to answer the ends

pro-

proposed by them notwithstanding the ut-
 most negligence in this respect, of those, who
 first set them on foot. What can it signifie to
 a familie, that it was originally formed and
 modeled upon the principles of order and
 œconomie, if there be not as sincere, as
 direct, as stedfast a design to adhere to
 these principles in the subsequent govern-
 ment of it, and to keep up an habitual sen-
 sibilitie of their importance, as there was
 at first to introduce them? what to a state,
 that its founders were lovers of libertie,
 bold in defending it, wise and cautious
 in laying the basis of its perpetuitie, if
 their degenerate sons have but just spirit
 enough to wish for this, without exerting
 a single effort of their own in its behalf,
 or being the least alarmed at that corrup-
 tion and degeneracie of manners, which,
 according to the concurring testimonie of
 universal historie, appear to be the certain
 bane and absolute destruction of everie state
 or national communitie, in which they have
 generally diffused themselves. Those pub-
 lic rights and honors, that have in one age
 been contended for at the expence of ease,
 of treasure, and of blood, have in the very
 next been sacrificed to effeminacie, to lux-
 urie, to avarice, to pride; and through a
 prevailing and grossly stupid inattention to
 their worth and importance, become total-
 ly

ly irrecoverable. In short, indifference alone to any wise or honorable measures in those, who have formerly abetted them, must of necessity terminate in their ruin, even tho' no opposition should be made to them from any other quarter. Nor only does it implicate the absence of those warm and vigorous principles, which at first produced them, but, when once, likewise, the mind is thus unbraced and become enervate, it is impossible we should long hold out against the encroachment of other passions, which will gradually and insensibly create an opposite interest in our own hearts, and consequently a growing aversion to what we once so justly approved.

How
relished
by
itself.

Besides, where is that generous man among you, how great soever may have been the ardor of your charitie, how strong soever the flame of your pious zeal, that would not feel with the utmost disdain, the unnatural, presumptuous flatterie of being told, that he had already attained to the utmost height of christian benevolence, that he was not only absolutely secured against sinking into the languors of declining virtue, but that his sympathie towards the distressed and unhappie could not possibly be more enlarged, his friendship to the good and virtuous refined, or to some higher

higher pitch exalted? The more desirous we are to keep up the spirit of that laudable, public charitie, which we are now met on purpose to encourage, to, at least, its present height, the more we dread the thought of its being by any negligence of ours concurring with such external events, as may now be little thought of, reduced at length to the sickly remains of a once fair, lovely and compacted scheme, the more we wish to have its usefulness extended, and its glory encreased, the more shall we welcome any attempt expressly made, with the design of recalling our minds anew to the consideration of those generous, those interesting, and important principles upon which we have already and with so much honor engaged in it. So far shall we be from esteeming this to be an inconsistent or superfluous labor, on account of its former success, or present securitie, that for these very reasons we shall be the better pleased with whatever carries in it the least probability of ensuring it, still more effectually, against every means and symptom of declension. The greater satisfaction and complacencie you have formerly taken in the exercise of mercie and compassion, the more susceptible must you still be of these generous impressions. By having the reasonableness and high importance of those principles,

Particular
Reference
of the ensu-
ing Subject.

ples, upon which this charitie has been established, now laid before you, you will naturally be led to look back with pleasing reflection on the encouragement you have hither to given it. And by this means you will, I hope, be prompted to look forward, with still increasing sentiments of generositie towards those, who are still depending upon your assistance. On these principles, and with these views it is, that I have chosen to discourse upon the present occasion, from that passage of scripture, that has just now been recited. It contains the exhortation of an evangelical and inspired apostle very solemnly and pathetically addressed to the Thessalonian christians. "And we beseech you, brethren, to know them, who labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them very highly in love for their works sake. And be at peace among yourselves." In discoursing upon which words I propose in the

Method of
treating it.

First place, briefly to consider the account, that is here given us of a minister's character and office.

Secondly to illustrate those duties, that are here inculcated upon those, who are connected with him, by virtue of this character or office he sustains, and supposed to be incumbent upon them in consequence of

of this mutual relation ; and also upon all others in general towards any one standing in the same relation, and faithfully discharging the obligations of it.

Thirdly, To consider the reason, upon which these duties are founded ; “ for their works sake.” And then in the

Fourth place, more directly to apply the subject to the peculiar design of our present meeting.

First I am briefly to consider that account, which is here given us of a minister's character and office. And it consists, as you may observe, of three particulars.

CHARACTER OF A MINISTER.

In the first place a minister is here described and spoken of as one who “ labors “ among” his people. And every one, I am certain, that has any tolerable apprehensions concerning the nature and design of the ministerial employment, must be fully satisfied, that it is in truth, a laborious one. It is no small difficultie even to engage men to hear us, with any sufficient degree of attention. We may indeed resolve at all adventures to address ourselves to some of their favorite prejudices. And in that case any man may be attended to. What, however, in the mean time, must we think of his integrity ? But otherwise, and supposing a minister to look upon himself as obliged to studie the temper, prejudices and inclinations of his

Labor.

D

hearers,

hearers, not for the sake of indulging them indiscriminately, but of knowing, how he may best promote their real interests, which he may often think to be by counter-acting and opposing their present taste and inclination; what care must be taken? how much labor employed and industrie exerted in order to his being heard, even in such a manner, as to give him any present satisfaction? But how much more difficult still to be heard in such a manner, as to get the better of those prepossessions, he would so gladly eradicate, and to gain a victorie over those corrupt and evil habits he so much desires to subdue? And yet this final success is what in proportion to the integrity and goodness of his views, we must suppose to be his chief and ultimate aim. Even the apostles themselves had not, as I presume, a more arduous task in this respect, than those, who in these modern times undertake, with due simplicitie of heart, the defence and preaching of the gospel. They had, it is true, deep-rooted prejudices of everie kind to encounter. But then they had miraculous powers, by the help of which to carrie on the contest. Could a christian minister now a days work only one or two incontestable miracles in the face of his audience, how might he triumph in the securitie he had of being properly attended to for the future; even tho' what

Miracles.

what he delivered should be ever so much destitute of the regular and studied arts of insinuation and address, or ever so contrarie to their prejudicate opinions and long indulged vices? But certain it is, that men were not in the days of the apostles more attached to the idols of silver and gold erected in their temples, than they are now to those of superstition, bigotry and iniquity, that have got possession of their hearts. And yet how small are our advantages for bringing down these idols, like Dagon, before the ark, in comparison of those, which these primitive "ministers of the new testament" enjoyed, and which can only be in a very imperfect degree compensated by indefatigable application. I would only observe farther under this head, that as "laboring among" a people is here made to be one essential characteristic of a christian minister, as well as being "over" them in the "Lord," and to stand in necessarie conjunction with it, we may from hence very naturally conclude, that none can be said to be "over" any people "in the Lord," whatever peculiarly sacred relation or venerable character they may assume, who do not labor among them at all. But this leads us to consider more distinctly the meaning of that expression, which comprehends

Idols.

Ministerial
claims,

Apostles.

Authoritie.

◀ The second thing observable in the text with relation to the ministerial office. Ministers are here represented, as being "over" their people "in the Lord." The meaning of which cannot, I think, be better explained, than by the conduct of the apostles, from one of whose number it is, that we have received this description or account of it. For it must surely be unpardonable insolence, in any of succeeding times to claim, under the character of christian ministers, higher privileges and greater prerogatives, than appear to have been ever claimed even by the apostles themselves. And what can be more evident, throughout all their writings, and the whole course of their behavior, than that they affected no airs of preeminence or superior dignitie, but adhered inviolably to that maxim of our blessed Savior's: "He that is the *greatest* among you let him be the *servant* of all." That is, let there be no other precedencie among you, than that, which arrises from a superior zeal and more distinguished ardor in serving the cause and interest of the gospel. What can be more evident, than that the deference, which they expected to be paid to their decisions, was founded upon no other authoritie, than that, which was derived from truth, from the conformitie of these decisions to the doctrine

doctrine of our blessed Savior himself, and upon the miraculous powers, with which he had invested them, as his ministers and apostles? And even with respect to this authoritie, venerable as indeed it was, they not only permitted, but enjoined it upon everie one to determine, according to the judgment and conviction of his own mind, not insisting upon any prerogative whatsoever, or the least degree of respect, on the footing only of blind obedience, or implicit faith. And as they were far from avowing any prerogatives of this sort, so neither did they endeavor by craft or policy to acquire them. Whatever respect and honor naturally resulted from each ones personal integritie, each one did for himself modestly accept of, and, upon just occasions vindicate and assert. But we find not the least traces of their having erected themselves into a distinct, separate, and independent order of men, all of whom were to be esteemed more holy and venerable, than the rest of mankind, abstractedly from each ones individual and personal merit, and merely for the order's sake. No swelling titles, no sumptuous badges of distinction, no peculiar forms of homage do we find the least intimation of in the scripture-account of their claims and character. And yet certainly, if there were ever any men

Doctrine.

Respect.

Modestie.

Order,

Titles.

Homage.

Honor of
the Minister-
ial charac-
ter asserted.

Whence de-
rived.

in the world, who could have been justified in aspiring to privileges of this sort, or reasonably invested with them, on religious considerations, or the merit of any peculiar services done to the christian church, it must have been they. What then? Is it to be concluded from their having made no such claims as these, that they had no esteem for the evangelical or ministerial office; that they looked upon it to be of little or no account? This is the inference, that is by many drawn to the prejudice of those who denie these claims when advanced by others. They are represented, as having a slight opinion of the christian ministrie, as intending to expose it to contempt and ridicule, and as undermining even the gospel itself. But certainly, without any foundation in reason, unless we can suppose the apostles themselves to have had the same design. But very coinsequently with the most honorable opinion of the christian ministrie; nay, as the necessarie consequence of such an opinion, they believed, that its own natural importance, would sufficiently recommend it to men of reason and competent discernment. They concluded that those, who engaging in it, did with a sincere and constant eye to the noble purposes it was intended to answer, exert themselves diligently and with zeal,

zeal, would be sure to meet with esteem from the wise and virtuous, without any artificial methods of recommendation; and that those, who did not, would be far from having any right to it. And from these several considerations we shall be able easily to collect the meaning of the apostle, when he speaks of christian ministers, as being over their respective congregations "in the Lord." This latter phrase is very frequently made use of to signify the being a christian, or the making a profession of the gospel; and sometimes as another term, by which to denote the christian religion itself.

Thus we read of the "dead in Christ," that is, deceased christians; of some, who were "in Christ" before others, that is, who had made an earlier profession of the gospel; and once more, that "in Christ", that is, according to the gospel constitution or tenor of the christian religion, "neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature." When

"In the
"Lord;"

Scripture-
sense of that
expression.

therefore christian ministers are said to be "over" their churches "in the Lord," the obvious and natural import of the expression is; that it is the proper business of their station to carry on the public exercises of religion and the solemnities of social worship in the assemblies to which they severally belong, in such a manner, as shall

Being over a
people "in
"the Lord,"

how to be
understood.

THE CHRISTIAN MINISTER.

Pulpit.

be most exactly conformable to the spirit of the gospel, and most effectually subserve the ends of it. It is therefore their incumbent dutie, according to the manifest intent and meaning of this expression, to promote in these stated exercises, the fear, the reverence, and the love of God in the hearts of their hearers, a most devout and humble submission to his will, and an ardent desire of resembling more and more the spotless and infinite perfections of his nature. But we can never look upon it to be the indispensable dutie of a christian minister, that he should make it his habitual care to render his services in the pulpit, as conducive as possible towards enlightening the understandings, exalting the devotion, establishing the pious resolutions, and confirming the virtuous sentiments of his audience or people, and that at the same time, he should be under no sort of obligation to pursue the like important purposes in the general scope of his conversation, life and actions. Is a tradesman never to have his thoughts employed about his trade or business, but when actually in his shop, or in his counting-house? or the husbandman about his agriculture, but when walking in his fields? We see at once the absurditie of supposing it. and are we not with equal certaintie led to conclude, that

that by every method, which reason, experience or attentive consideration may suggest, besides his public ministrations, the christian pastor is to exert himself to the utmost in promoting the confirmation and advancement of his people in the spirit and temper of the gospel? But

Thirdly, another part of the minister's dutie here introduced is, admonition. "Who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord, and *admonish* you." Tho' this distinct and particular branch of his office was clearly enough included in those more general expressions, that have been already considered, yet the apostle, it seems thought proper to specify it apart. At the same time it is evident, that it cannot be naturally or easily comprehended within the compass of those religious exercises, which consist in acts of immediate devotion and direct addresses to the supreme, universal father of spirits. And from hence it is, I think, to be infered, that those discourses, which in our religious solemnities are addressed to the people, and to which only, among the public exercises of religion, the dutie of admonition can strictly be refered, enter more essentially into the very design and meaning of these public exercises than many seem to be aware of. For allowing, as undoubtedly we ought, that of private

Admonition.

Religious worship.

Different Branches of it.

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Mistakes in
relation to
them.

expostulation to be included in the expression ; it is not easie to apprehend, how this can be at all a dutie, without considering at the same time the public exercises of devotion, as affording one of the most natural opportunities for carrying on the same design. Yet by some the intention of our public solemnities seems to be wholly confined to prayer and psalmodie, and the subsequent discourse to be considered rather as a mere form of concluding the service, than as making any necessarie or very important branch of it. Others, indeed, there are, who are much more attentive to a sermon. But then they consider it merely as an exercise of skill, and as a trial of the preacher's abilities, instead of looking upon it, as intended to answer the same purposes in common with the other parts of our religious and social exercises. And, accordingly, they give their attention to it, not as practical hearers, but as deciding critics. It is true indeed, that even discourses of this kind, and introduced in this connection, cannot with such exact propriety be considered under the notion of divine worship, as those addresses, which are immediately offered up to the soverign deitie. Nevertheless, they may justly be comprehended under that general idea, even, tho' we should not suppose them to constitute so essential

essential a part of it. For certainly the serious use of such means as are well calculated to impress our minds with an awful veneration for God and his laws, cannot, but be a branch of that natural homage, which is indispensably due to him. But there is another, and a still more pernicious extreme, with reference to this matter. The mention of which therefore I cannot, upon this occasion, omit. The extreme, I mean, is, the looking upon all the acts of devotion carried on in our public solemnities and preceding an address to the audience as intended to answer no other end, than merely that of being an introduction to it. Audacious affront offered to the infinite majesty of heaven and earth; to consider the celebration of his most glorious excellencies, only as a kind of prelude or preparatorie scene, to a short and perhaps very low and trifling intercourse between man and man! Amazing insolence! to wish, as it is to be feared, many often do, that the solemn acknowledgement of God's universal government and boundless perfections, upon which the fate of nature and the hopes of all intelligent beings are depending, to wish, I say, that such exercises, as these, may soon be over, for the sake only of gratifying our curiositie, or perhaps of indulging our indolence, during the remaining service.

Devotion.

Dignity of
it debased.

Ministerial
Fideli tie.

vice ! But give me leave to observe once more under this particular, that the dutie of admonition here supposed essentially to belong to the ministerial office, does in the strongest manner implie the necessitie of faithfulness, sinceritie and incorruption in those who undertake it. It obliges us to the utmost impartialitie in inquiring into the truth of religion for ourselves and to invincible resolution in making the fairest and fullest representations of it to others. For what indifferent monitors must we be, if we either forbear to expose this or that particular immoralitie for fear of giving offence to some of our hearers, who may possibly be guiltie of it ; or if we inculcate such principles upon our audience, which have rather a tendencie to encourage them in all their vices, than to cure them of any ?

Reciprocal
duties of a
people to
their
Minister.

I would now procede to the second thing proposed to be considered in our present discourse. And that is, the dutie, which is here made incumbent upon those, who are connected with a minister, by virtue of that office or character already explained, and in consequence of this their relation to him, and likewise upon all in general, towards any one sustaining such a character and faithfully discharging the obligations of it. And it is thus expressed. “ And we beseech you, brethren,

to

“ to know them, who labor among you,
 “ and are over you in the Lord, and ad-
 “ monish you ; and to esteem them very
 “ highly in love.” To which the apostle
 adds another dutie of very manifest obliga-
 tion, independently of this particular con-
 nection, but, which may nevertheless be
 very usefully insisted upon with a pecu-
 liar reference to it. “ And be at peace a-
 “ mong yourselves.” As for the former
 duties, more immediately and distinctly re-
 sulting from the nature of the ministerial
 office, and the relation subsisting between
 a minister, and the people among whom
 he labors, there is not a single word in the
 account here given of them, that is not
 highly expressive and emphatical. “ We

“ beseech you, says the apostle to *know*
 “ them who labor among you, and are over
 “ you in the Lord, and admonish you.”

Emphatical
 language of
 the apostle.

This strongly implies an obligation incum-
 bent upon the people, as well as upon their
 minister, to acquire, and to familiarize to
 themselves, proper apprehensions concern-
 ing the nature and design of his office. And
 indeed without this, how is it possible that
 they should be able, either to regulate their
 expectations from him, or to make the just
 improvement of his ministrations among
 them? When a peoples notions upon this
 head are false and erroneous, what must be

Office of a
 Minister :

the



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To be understood by
this people.

Brief account of it.

the consequence? In all probabilities one or other of the two, that I am going to mention. Either the minister will resolve at any rate to humor their prejudices, and cherish their misapprehensions, whatever they may happen to be, and thus to render his ministerial labors an act of homage to his people, instead of service to his God. Or if he should abhor the thought of this servile idolatry, the people will be prejudiced against his better views, and be apt to think, that he is forgetting his duty towards them, at the very time he is discharging it with the utmost fidelity, and with the tenderest concern for their real welfare. And how can they more safely judge of the design of the christian ministry, than by the account that is given us in the new testament of the grand purpose and ultimate aim of christianity itself. "Know" then your ministers, as men, whose peculiar business it is, not to serve the interests of a particular party, not to be advocates for this or that set of notions, not to be the promoters of mere speculative knowledge, or even of mere speculative truth, not to be perpetually gratifying your curiosity with new discoveries, not to charm your ears with melodious sounds, not to amuse your fancies; much less to rivet your prejudices, least of all to soothe your vices, but to inculcate

culcate sobriety, godliness, meekness, patience, charity; to extirpate every corrupt affection and sordid passion, to render your love of goodness more sublime and ardent, and your attachment to the cause and interest of virtue, amidst surrounding difficulties, snares and vanities, firm and invincible. This precept of the apostle likewise naturally implies, that a people should know their minister, as one whom they themselves have professedly and deliberately chosen into their society, in order to assist their devotions, to carry on their solemn acts of praise and humble supplication before the throne of God, and to contribute, in every respect, and to the utmost of his power, to their religious and moral improvement.

Chosen to
by his
people.

And how inconsistent must it be with such a proceeding, for this very people, after all, to content themselves with attending upon his labors, on particular occasions only, or merely by the starts of fancy? How unreasonable, how inequitable, how unnatural to expect, that he should be habitually employing himself in offices of this kind, and directing all his thoughts and pursuits to the rendering them more acceptable and useful; and that they nevertheless should, either upon the slightest and most frivolous pretences imaginable, absent themselves from the place of worship, in which he officiates;

Conse-
quence
thence to be
deduced.

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officiates; or, if there, indulge to so much
 indolence and inattention, as would cause
 his services, were he an angel from heaven,
 to be altogether fruitless and unavailing.
 Again, to "know them, who labor
 " among you, and are over you in the
 " Lord and admonish you", implies the du-
 tie of considering and habitually remem-
 bring, that, if they are faithful and con-
 scientious in discharging the office they have
 undertaken, it must necessarily appropri-
 ate by far the greatest part of their atten-
 tion and their time. It is therefore by no
 means to be wondered at, if they are not
 at libertie to engage in everie little amuse-
 ment, that may be proposed to them from
 abroad. And it would be the highest in-
 gratitude in a people, if they did not en-
 deavor to lighten these necessarie fatigues
 and labors of their function, by puting
 them to as little inconvenience as possible,
 with respect to their temporal and worldly
 concerns. But this naturally leads me to
 mention another obligation very evidently
 included, in the dutie of "knowing those,
 " who labor among you;" and that is the
 considering, upon all occasions, that they
 are men of the same nature, and of the
 same passions, with yourselves. They have
 the same wants to be supplied, and you
 have promised to supplie them. And not
 only

Amuse-
 ment.

Liberalitie.

only so; but they are incident to the same imperfections with you, and are liable, like you, to wrong views, and mistaken apprehensions of things, and have therefore a right to the same candid and favorable construction to be put both upon their general behavior and their particular actions. So that it would be the utmost arrogance and injustice to slight and despise their ministrie, to overlook their interest, or to neglect their welfare, on account only of such imperfections, which in other cases, at least, in your own, you can so easily reconcile to a character of great integritie and goodness upon the whole. But according to the view of things exhibited in the text, there is something farther incumbent upon a people or societie towards those, who labor amongst them in the ministerial office, than merely their making a sutable provision for their worldly accommodation, or favorable allowance for their moral imperfections. And it is both solemnly and tenderly enjoined upon you by the apostle, that you "esteem" them. No man indeed can justly expect to be esteemed by others, solely, for his being called a minister. Nor can any one express himself with greater contempt of everie false pretension to this character, or with greater indignation against the hypocrisie and wickedness of advancing them,

Candor,

Esteem,

THE CHRISTIAN MINISTER.

them, than Saint Paul. But he well knew, that in those times of difficultie and danger, with respect, even to christians in general, no one could justly maintain the character of a christian minister, or with sufficient resolution discharge the duties of it, without an ample fund of pietie, benevolence and self-denial. And are not these the qualities, that have in everie age and nation excited the esteem and approbation of mankind? Can they be less honorable and less amiable in a christian minister, than in another man? Can a whole life deliberately and ardently devoted to the cause of religion, virtue and christian libertie be without its merit? And are there not even now those difficulties and discouragements subsisting, as may tend not a little to illustrate this merit, and ascertain its realitie? What, tho' some assuming the ministerial character may debase and dishonor it? If there be indeed any others who dignifie and adorn it, does not this very circumstance rather tend to enhance their worth? The apostle, however, goes farther still, exhorting the Thessalonians, not only to "esteem those," who labor among them, and are "over them in the Lord;" but to "esteem" them "very highly," solicitous, as it should seem, that the full tribute of praise and honor should be given to whatever peculiar virtue might appear to animate their conduct, and this not

Degree of it.

from

from a principle of vanitie or ostentation, as being himself a christian preacher, or with an arrogant ambition of engrossing, in behalf of one particular order of men, all the merit of human characters, all the reverence and affection of human hearts; but upon the maxims of natural justice and universal equitie; and from a persuasion, that the comfort and usefulness of a faithful minister must in a very high degree depend upon his being esteemed and respected among his people, according to the real proportion of his good desert. Once more, he urges it upon them, not only to "esteem those, who labor among them and are over them, in the Lord;" not only to "esteem them verie highly," but to "esteem them verie highly in love." By which expression he intended undoubtedly still more precisely and determinately to fix the true nature and idea of that respect, which he claimed in behalf of a modest, humble, sincere and laborious minister of the gospel. Many are apt to think, that they sufficiently esteem a man, even tho' his merit, with respect to themselves at least, may be verie considerable, if they do not absolutely hate him. And, in the language of numbers, to wish a man very well, tho' intended to pass for an expression of esteem, means no more, than that they do not wish him very ill. Others again

Love,

Sinceritie.

gain are apt to think, that they amply demonstrate their esteem and affection for a minister, if they are but exact and punctual in paying him their outward compliments and civilities; especially, if these are now and then intermingled with a trite commendation of his services. But the apostle has verie plainly determined in the text, that all those pretensions to esteem are either senseless or hypocritical, which do not terminate in solid acts of beneficence and friendship, according to our abilitie, towards, those, who appear to be the objects of it. So that, "to esteem, those, who labor among you and are over you in the Lord very highly *in love* means, in short, a real, cordial and substantial esteem, in opposition to the mere semblance or affectation of it.

Unitie.

Before I pass on to a more particular consideration of the reason, upon which this injunction, or as I should rather say, this tender, earnest entreatie of the apostles is founded, permit me, in a word or two, to consider the additional exhortation here given. "And be at peace among yourselves." That charitie in behalf of which I have now the honor of being an intercessor, is a noble monument of what I must call; whilst you excuse the seeming impropriety of the expression; dissenting unitie.

Would

Would to God, the principle were but more generally diffused! Would to God, that all partie names were abolished, or at least, that they stood for nothing more than the signs of our ideas, not the characteristical boundaries of our affections! Would to God, that no man amongst us was to be esteemed either more or less, merely on account of the denomination in which he ranks, but according to the good opinion, which we have reason to entertain of his probitie and virtue! How glorious would be our name! how great our character in the christian world! if, notwithstanding our different persuasions, we were all united in promoting to the utmost, an impartial, candid and unreserved investigation of the truth, without the least disposition to any coolness of affection, on account of what may possibly be the very different result of our respective inquiries? How much would it redound to our honor, if our different sentiments, instead of making any breach in our union, contributed only to illustrate it? And how evidently would it then appear, that we were more intent upon the end of religion, than upon speculating concerning those doctrines, the propagating a belief of which amongst others, be they ever so clear and well-established, can only be considered, as the means of it?

Encomium
of it.

Were

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Were all shyness, and reserve of affection, on account of particular opinions absolutely laid aside, how much more effectually might ministers in general promote the common edification? and what a happy pledge might be given us for the stabilitie of our common interest? I could not, upon this occasion, excuse myself from saying thus much, on the principle of christian unities out of my own hearty affection for it. To say more might seem to be suspecting yours. I go on therefore to the

HONOR
of the
ministerial
Character.

Third thing proposed. Which was to consider the reason, upon which the apostle has founded the dutie of "esteeming verie highly in love, those, who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you." And this is what he lays claim to in their behalf, "for their works sake." It is now become a very customarie, and indeed almost a reputable thing, to throw contempt upon all the social exercises of religion. But shall we despise, nay, shall we make it even the mark of our politeness and good taste, to despise, that, concerning which, after the most deliberate reflection, we must be utterly unable to shew by any appeal to nature or to reason, that it is really and in truth contemptible? And can this be done in the case before us. Do we not believe in a God? are
not

not his perfections infinitely venerable? do we content ourselves with the secret admiration alone of inferior, limited, human virtue? Are we not immediately prompted by this inward admiration itself, prompted, for the sake of our own satisfaction, of doing honor to the excellencies we admire, and of promoting a due estimation of them amongst others, gladly to embrace every opportunity of publicly expressing this sentiment of our minds? And can less than this be natural, can less than this be just and equitable, with respect to eternal, infinite, immutable perfection? Will it be said, that the supremely blessed father of spirits cannot be benefited by our services? It is true. But is it not true likewise, in relation to numbers of our fellow-creatures; whose virtue, nevertheless, we think ourselves bound to celebrate, of whose name and character, of whose benevolence and glorious deeds, we think it highly useful and greatly for our own honor to keep up a stated, habitual and social remembrance? Is it not then a manifest contradiction to the obvious dictates, to the immediate, instinctive principles of human nature, to treat with contempt the public veneration of the supreme, eternal Deity, the original, perpetual, inexhaustible source of good, the universal benefactor, whose mercies are not only diffused, throughout

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Inward
Devotion.External
acts of it.Mutual
Example.

throughout this world of ours, but extended to worlds innumerable, to the intire, the immense system, of all rational and intelligent natures? This great creator and sovereign Lord of all is indeed to be worshiped as God, as a pure and absolute spirit. Yet we are to present our homage, and to offer up our adorations to him, as men; as beings, who are capable of having the inward devotion of our hearts cherished and excited by the external, public exercises of religion, and our virtuous resolutions by these means confirmed. And, if the spiritual worship of God be indeed in the highest degree natural and improving to the human heart, what greater inconsistencie can we any way be guilty of, than to think lightly of those external acts, that are fitted to encourage and to invigorate these inward sentiments? Besides, by our assembling together in a serious, grave and reverential manner for the worship of God, the heavenly flame of devotion may be communicated by mutual example, as well as fed and nourished by the immediate solemnitie of the worship itself. Can it be denied, that the more firmly we are established by the social exercises of religion, not only in the belief and persuasion of the being, providence and universal government of God, but also in a devout and humble

humble sense of his presence, in an habitual desire to please him, in a growing ambition to be like him, public justice, integrity and happiness will be more effectually provided for? What is it, that has ennobled the names of so many illustrious heroes in the annals of antiquity, but their love and practice of virtue? And can the love and practice of it be honorable, and yet the office of recommending it contemptible or insignificant? Who will dispute the usefulness of sobriety, righteousness and general benevolence towards securing the tranquillity and preserving the order of human society. Let a man deny, if he please, or rather, if he can, the moral obligation of virtue and the reality of it, as being in its own nature a worthy and approvable principle of action; yet he cannot, unless his understanding has been to the last degree stupified by the corruption of his heart, he cannot deny, that the temper itself, in which moral virtue is supposed to consist, is a temper highly beneficial to society and conducive to the good of man. And if so, those institutions, that are calculated to recommend and inculcate it, must needs be, in proportion, calculated for public utility. The more that virtuous temper prevails, which it is the grand business and employment of a christian

Moral obligation.

Moral Temper.

Libertine.

tian minister to diffuse and propagate among mankind, the more securely must even the atheistic libertine, upon his own principles, allow himself to possess his right and propertie. How greatly then must the importance of such an office be heightened, when the realitie of religion, the truth of moral obligations, and the certaintie of a future state are admitted? I cannot therefore, for my own part, conceive of any thing more unnatural, any thing more inconsistent with all pretensions to soliditie of thought or refinement of reason, than to own the principles of religion, to assert the obligations of virtue, to entertain the expectation of a future state; and yet to treat the public worship of God, either in the levitie of conversation, or by our cold, indifferent attendance upon it, as if it were nothing more or better than a relic of popular superstition. Having thus endeavored to illustrate the several particulars of the text. I must now beg leave in the

Particular
Application
of the
Subject.

Fourth place, to make a more direct application of the subject, than I have yet done, to the particular occasion of our present meeting. And to this end I shall pursue in a few words the reflections, that have been last insisted upon. Imagine to your-

Ministerial
character.

selves then a minister of the gospel incessantly applying himself to the pursuit of knowlege,

knowledge, not merely for the sake of acquiring it, or making an ostentatious parade of it, not for his own private amusement alone, or even with a view only to the satisfaction of his own doubts; but to qualify himself for greater usefulness, and, that he may have the more to communicate. Suppose him to be maintaining upon his mind a sacred and reverential love of truth; to be acting under an habitual sense of the divine presence, and under the firm conviction, that none of those solemnities of outward worship, which he is called upon stately to conduct, no kind of acceptance, which he may meet with, from those among whom he ministers, no degree of reputation, which he may have acquired amongst mankind in general, can be the means of recommending him to the divine favor, but the integritie alone of his own heart and temper. Describe him to yourselves, as incessantly inculcating the most important principles and maxims of religion with the deepest concern for the welfare of immortal souls, with the most serious and heart-affecting apprehensions of the inattention, forgetfulness and backwardness of mankind, with respect to those religious concerns, which, if their precious souls are indeed immortal, must be of the highest and most momen-

Farther illustrations
of it.

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tous nature. Imagine him to do this with the greatest self-denial, with a renunciation of everie worldly interest, that can come in competition with the main end and purposes of his ministrie, with an intire willingness to sacrifice his pleasure and his ease, and to exert the utmost vigor both of bodie and of mind, in endeavoring to promote the cause of undissembled pietie, of generous virtue and primitive christianitie. Is it possible to hesitate a moment about the usefulness of such a character? Is it possible to believe, that a man of such a temper, habitually laboring for the good of an attentive, thoughtful, well-disposed and affectionate people, must not verie highly contribute by his labors to the promoting of everie valuable, social, human interest? And yet this is the natural character of a christian minister. Can industrie have a more direct or immediate tendencie to procure riches, or bodily exercise to procure health, than the services of such a minister to substantial usefulness? The effect of industrie may be defeated by imprudence, of exercise by intemperance, and the natural usefulness of the christian ministrie, thro' the influence of various causes, be diminished and obstructed. But is industrie therefore to be discarded, bodilie exercise avoided, or the christian ministrie renounced? The inutilitie, or even the abuse of any institutions

stitutions or measures, that have an apparent tendencie, according to their original design, and the simplicities of their first principles, to usefulness and common benefit, can be no reason for rejecting or laying them aside, but is a verie natural one for encouraging and supporting them, with a view to their more effectual accomplishment of those purposes, which, in their own nature, they are so apparently fitted to answer, and securitie against the like defects or abuses for the future.

Need I to illustrate these reflections by pointing out the many inconveniencies and disadvantages, which the ministers particularly concerned in the charitable contributions before us often labor under, on account of their dissent from the civil establishment of religion? Whether this dissent be founded upon just principles or not, yet their integritie in adhering to it upon their own personal conviction of its reasonableness and necessitie will surely recommend them to the favorable regards of everie ingenuous and upright mind. And so has the human heart been formed by the universal father of spirits, in subserviencie to the general principle of benevolence, that our good-will to particular persons naturally

Integritie

Benevolence

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turally flows on beyond themselves, continuing and extending its refreshing streams, even to those, who have any more immediate connections with them; to their acquaintance, their friends, their families and their posteritie. And to the minister himself, while living among his people, spending his strength, and perhaps shortening his days in their service, it will be no small satisfaction to know; that his familie, upon his decease, and if their circumstances should require it, may find some immediate relief from your liberalitie, and even continue to share in your bountie, so long as their difficulties and necessities shall make it proper to applie for it. But were the useful characters of those, for the comfort of whose widows and orphans this charitie is intended, intirely out of the question, yet would this be no just bar to the exercise of your liberalitie, upon the present occasion. Real want and real distress are of themselves natural recommendations to human compassion and benevolence. I make no doubt, but that many of those widows, in whose behalf I am now entreating your kind and generous assistance, have contributed not a little to the usefulness of the deceased partners of their lives, by their affable, gentle, condescending and courteous behavior, by their frugalitie and oeconomie, by their patience

Familie.

Christian
Compassion.

Natural Re-
commendation to it;

What.

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tience and meekness, under mutual difficulties and disappointments. This is a consideration, that ought by all means to enliven your compassion in favor of the collection that is now to be made. Yet is it not absolutely necessarie for exciting it. Should there be any case, within the known extent of this charitie, in which there is but little merit to reward; yet still it is a case, in which there is want to be relieved. Our goodness is to be formed according to the model of that which is divine. And were that to be suspended for a defect of merit; what must become of the best of human race? nay, what of the highest angelic orders! For even they are not "clean" in the sight of God," but amidst the transcendent and inconceivable lustre of his infinite perfections stand "chargable with" follie." What, tho' your distributions amount not to that full relief, which your generous dispositions would incline you so greatly to rejoice in? No one, who is at all acquainted with, or in the least considers, the exigencies of a straitened and narrow condition of life, can be insensible that what you are in fact enabled annually to contribute towards the assistance of the fatherless and the widows, and which will not, I hope, be diminished, but rather encreased, must needs be a verie seasonable and welcome

Divine
Example.

Farther
Motives.

Importance
and great
utilitie of
the present
Charitie to
the immediate
objects
of it.

E 4

supplie

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supplie. And, as to the orphans in particular, how happily, and how amply may it suffice for placing them in such a station as will at once secure them against the temptations of a corrupted world, and enable them after a while, and by the blessing of God upon an honorable and chearful industrie, to live above the want of such an annual succour. Let the refreshment, that has been already given to the distressed and afflicted, and the grateful sense of your former bounties, which they are at this instant bearing upon their hearts, encourage you to continue your generous contributions. And, if God has encreased your worldly store, let this your greater abilitie for doing good, and your own thankfulness to God, whose providence has "made you rich," proportionably encrease and heighten your benevolent disposition. How usefully and agreeably might you consider your donations to a charitie, like this, as a kind of annual consecration of all your worldly possessions? When a just part of them has been bestowed, in this and other acts of beneficence and mercie, with what innocence, with what tranquillitie, with what dignitie may you enjoy the rest? If benevolence be in any degree natural to mankind, as it surely must, you have now an opportunitie of refreshing
 your

Gratitude.

Consecration.

 Innocence,
 Tranquillitie
 Dignitie.

your own hearts, as well as of making the
 "heart of the fatherless and the widow to
 "sing for joy." To have our wants relieved,
 our sorrows mitigated, our griefs asswaged,
 is the happiness of humanitie. But to have
 the power and the disposition to be the au-
 thors of such relief is, in it's degree, a god-
 like joy. And sure I am, that, the more
 we feel ourselves refreshed and solaced with
 the consciousness of well-doing, the more
 like we are to that divine favor of the hu-
 man race, whose "meat and whose drink"
 it was to do "the will" of his heavenly fa-
 ther in "going about doing good", in pro-
 moting our eternal happiness, and even in
 dying for the sake of our immortal souls.
 And can we refrain from the imitation of
 that amazing and matchless compassion,
 which we ourselves profess to praise, to ad-
 mire, and, in the most solemn acts of de-
 votion, habitually to commemorate? Our
 ancestors in this land were once highly
 famed for the ardor of their attachment to
 a religion, the most stupid and enslaving,
 the most ignominious to human nature,
 the most pernicious to human societie, the
 most repugnant to the honor of supreme
 Deitie, of any thing, that has ever yet
 been, or probably ever will be called by
 that venerable name. And shall we be less
 zealous in ours to the sublime and gener-

Pleasure,

Divine Joy.

The Divine
Savior.

Ancestors.

Brother-
hood.

Conclusion.

ous maxims of a pure and uncorrupted gospel, in demonstrating our value for its glorious privileges, or in cultivating its godlike spirit? In a word; for I will detain you no longer; let me entreat you to consider the persons, in whose behalf I have been pleading, as your brethren in nature, as your brethren in the gospel of Jesus Christ, as aspiring after the same happie immortalitie, which is the object of your own most intense and ardent wishes. And with these endearing considerations at heart, “be kindly affectioned” towards them, “distributing” with chearfulness, with generositie, with cordial love, “to the
“ necessities of the saints”,

AN

ORDINATION

OF A

MINISTER.

A N
Introductory Discourse

Delivered at the
O R D I N A T I O N
O F

Mr. *DANIEL NOBLE*,

October 9, 1755,

At *Mill-Yard, Goodmansfields.*

A N

INTRODUCTORIE DISCOURSE, &c.

BEFORE we procede any farther in the appointed services of the day, give me leave to lay before you a brief account of the nature and design of them. In every thing we do it should be our aim to act with some determinate end, that shall be futable to that religious and moral character, which both as men and as christians we are so strongly bound to maintain. The apostle Saint Peter seems to have urged it as a dutie incumbent upon christians in common, that they should be "able to give a reason of the hope that is in them."

Actions
Human ;

End to be
proposed in
all.

And it seems equally necessarie, that we should be able thus to account for any particular transactions relative to religion, in which we may at any time engage. In those portions of scripture, that have now been read to you (these were Psalm xcvi. Tit. ii. Eph. iv.) the nature, the reasonableness, the beautie, the usefulness, the necessitie of a social worship, are in a very lively

Social
Worship.

lively manner pointed out. And indeed I can scarce conceive of a greater absurditie, than to denie the proprietie, or assert the insignificancie of it, professing at the same time to believe in a supreme, eternal Deitie, possessed of infinite perfections, who is the common, universal parent of all intelligent natures, and upon whose favor and mercie we are all of us necessarily and absolutely dependent, both for our being and for everie degree of happiness we either enjoy, or have in prospect. Is it possible, that we should feel in our hearts any inward veneration for this glorious being, any grateful or ingenuous sense of his goodness towards us, without being desirous of expressing them after the most reverential manner, in such a manner, as may happily contribute towards impressing the minds of others with the like pious sentiments, improving, at the same time, and exalting the devotion of our own? can we possibly form an idea of any thing better calculated for this purpose, than the exercises of social, public worship? do we stand in no need of being reminded from time to time of the great truths and principles of religion, and of having them habitually inculcated upon us? or how can any such useful exercises and solemnities as these be carried on,

on, without some regular associations formed and supported for that purpose?

But it may be asked; may not a people or a societie voluntarily established, with a view to the promoting these good designs, chuse a minister and authorise him in the fullest and amplest manner to conduct their religious services and the stated solemnities of their public worship, without the concurrence of other ministers? Undoubtedly they may. Nay, they are indeed the only true and proper source of whatever authoritie any one can have to officiate among them in these their sacred solemnities. The person, whom a religious societie thus voluntarily formed, shall chuse for their minister, is by that very choice itself, and his own acceptance of it, fully authorised to exercise all pastoral offices among them. Other Ministers have no authoritie to give, no spiritual endowments, no graces, no powers to confer upon him. Shall we then content ourselves with saying of such services as these, which we are now entering upon, that they are conformable to the usual method of proceeding upon the like occasions, and therefore not to be omitted? It is true, that there are many, who attend for years together, even upon the stated exercises of public devotion, on no other account,

People.

Minister.

ORDINATION.

ORDAINERS.

The Solemnitie.

Not a Form only.

account, than because it is the custom of the world and become an established form among mankind. But do they in so doing act like men? Is it probable, that religious services, engaged in upon no better footing than this, should have any valuable, at least, any considerable influence upon our hearts and minds? Or what use, can we imagine, will arise from those in particular, which are now before us, if considered in no other light? But surely it is very obvious, that tho' no power, no authoritie is or can be conferred upon your minister by the persons officiating in such a solemnitie as this; it is, however, in the nature and tendencie of it very happily adapted to impress both your minds and his, with a deeper and more efficacious sense of those mutual obligations you lie under in consequence of that relation, which is now subsisting between you. This is a relation of which a solemn and most awful account is hereafter to be given before the high tribunal of heaven both by him and you. It cannot therefore without the utmost impropriety, without the most flagrant defect in the sentiments and temper of religion, be entered upon, either on your part or on his, with slight and superficial thoughts of the matter, or without the utmost seriousness and deliberation of spirit. It is a relation

Propriety
and usefulness
of it.

Future
account.

relation founded upon principles of the highest moment, and of everlasting importance. Not that the salvation of your souls does by any means necessarily depend upon your having a stated and established course of ministerial services carried on among you. For what then must be the miserable lot of those, who, by persecution, or by other means, have been deprived of every possible opportunitie of attending upon such exercises? What of those, who by infirmitie of bodie, are rendered incapable of it? But this it is you are to remember, that the promoting your spiritual improvement, the welfare and happiness of your immortal souls, is the great, the ultimate, the only just or natural design of that ministerial office, to which our friend is now devoting himself among you: And if both he and you are faithful, diligent, prudent and serious in this mutual relation, it is an office, that may, and undoubtedly will, have the most happy and beneficial effects towards answering these high and supremely important purposes. Is it not expedient then, that every method should be taken to render a sense of the duties belonging to it in the highest degree lively and affecting. Besides, it is only the pure and uncorrupted principles of religion that can have that important efficacy,

Salvation
of Souls.

Religion,

Pure.

Corrupted.

Ministerial
Difficulties.

cacie, which now we have been speaking of, or any natural tendencie to make us "wise unto salvation." It is these alone that can purifie and exalt our minds, or form us into a godlike disposition and heavenly spirit. At the same time it is easie to recollect those various superstitions, with which the plain and genuine principles of religion have been so frequently intermingled, by which their lustre has been so much obscured, and their efficacie so greatly abated; nay, which have sometimes been almost intirely substituted in the room of them. If we consider how many deep-rooted prejudices in favor of these superstitions prevail amongst mankind, and insensibly, yet very powerfully, influence their taste and passions; how hard it must be to represent the simple and uncorrupted doctrines of religious and moral truth in such a manner, as to subdue these prejudices, and at the same time to counter-act and to eradicate the inveterate habits of vice and iniquitie by the superior force of better principles; it will be easily seen, that the employment of a truly christian minister must be one of infinite labor, difficultie and self-denial. Is it to be imagined, that these important ends can, amidst so many discouraging circumstances, so many prejudices against it, so many contrarie

contrarie habits and opposing inclinations, be accomplished, or even so much as aimed at, with any tolerable satisfaction to a man's self; without the utmost exertion of his soul, without incessant application of mind, care, watchfulness, diligence, patience, meekness? A minister, in short, if these are the views he is to propose to himself, and these the obstacles he has to encounter, must be like the lamp spoken of in the mosaic law, that was "continually burning in the tabernacle of the Lord."

Exertion.

See Levitic. xxiv. 2, 3, 4. In proportion, however, to the importance and the difficulty, the labor, and the self-denial of the office, must be the glorious, sublime and godlike pleasure of discharging it faithfully.

Reward.

And, on all these accounts, what can be more necessarie, than that it should be entered upon with that seriousness of spirit, with that absolute devotedness of mind to the fear and the love of God, with those warm and lively sentiments of benevolence and compassion towards our fellow-men and fellow christians, which our present services have so natural a tendencie to inspire. Farther; whatever may be the abilities and qualifications of those, who undertake this religious ministration, for discharging it with dignitie and honor, with pleasure and usefulness; from whom is it, that they have

Ministerial
Abilities.

Divine
Source and
Origin of
christian
Libertie
and
Privileges

Appeal to
Heaven.

have received these abilities and powers, but from that supreme source of all existence, that sovereign author "of everie good" and perfect gift; in whom we live and "move and have our being." Is it not to his indulgent providence likewise, that all, who attend upon the solemnities of divine worship, are indebted for their libertie of doing it, and for the undisturbed opportunities they enjoy of making their approaches to the "throne of grace", in such a manner, as to themselves appears most agreeable to the principles of religion, and to those "lively oracles" of christian truth, the knowlege of which they have received thro' the same indulgence of heaven? And what can be more natural, than that this our absolute dependance upon the sovereign Deitie for all our abilities and powers, that our obligations to the divine grace and favor for these inestimable privileges should, at the commencement of this interesting relation between a minister and his people, be acknowleged in that serious and solemn manner, which the services now before us do so obviously expresse? But they have a still farther meaning; and that of a very important nature. For they carry in them a most deliberate and awful appeal to heaven, as to the integritie and sinceritie, the simplicitie of heart, the honorable

able views, the pure and uncorrupt intentions, with which this relation is mutually assumed. As for you the members of this societie I would gladly hope, that you have chosen a minister upon better principles than that of supporting merely a partie-interest, or of complying with a national and popular custom. Christians are at present very unhappily, and to the unspeakable prejudice of their common cause, that I mean, of vital and practical christianitie, addicted to the distinguishing of themselves by partie-names; and seem to be extremely fond of them. But in that great day of public appearance before the tribunal of Christ, which we all profess to live in the expectation of, it will never once be inquired, either by the judge himself, or any of his heavenly attendants, what denomination we were of. Nay, we ourselves, in all probabilitie, shall long before that awful period arrives, have quite forgotten it. And as for the outward form alone of religious and social worship, of what avail can it be, of what worth or value in the sight of God, who "seeth not as man seeth", who "searcheth the heart," who "requires truth in the inward parts;" in the soul and spirit of man, in the purposes and intentions of his mind; of what worth or value, I say, can be these merely external

Particular
Denomina-
tion.

External
Religion.

THE CHRISTIAN MINISTER.

ternal forms in the sight of God, without the animating principle of inward piety of love to God and of undissembled charity and good-will to our fellow creatures, and to our brethren in the common profession of the gospel? how dull and tiresome will the stated and public exercises of religion be thought; how apt shall we be to say of them, "what a weariness" are they, when we attend upon them only for form's sake, without any rational conviction, possessing our own minds of their utility and excellency, without any deliberate aim of promoting by means of them our own religious and moral improvement, our heavenly mindedness, our likeness to God, and our meetness for his favor in the realms of everlasting light and joy? Let me therefore repeat my pleasing hope that it is with the best of views, that you have chosen one to administer statedly among you in the exercises of religion and ordinances of the gospel? Let me indulge the thought, that it is with a view of having one, that shall continually "watch over your souls" with all the becoming seriousness and diligence, tenderness and affection of a man, who is to give an account before the "awful judgment seat of Christ" of his services among you. Let me believe it to be for the sake of having one in your own society,

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95

etic, whose stated business it shall be to contribute to your spiritual interests, that it is with a view of having your evil habits corrected, your tempers refined and made more conformable to the sacred laws and precepts, the sublime and elevated maxims of the gospel, your resolutions for the practice of every christian grace and virtue absolutely fixed, and your advancement in undissembled piety and holiness continually carried on. I hope likewise, that I may safely venture to congratulate you upon the choice of one, who will to the utmost of his power concur with you in promoting such excellent and highly interesting purposes. In your behalf, as well as for his own sake, it is my heartie wish and fervent prayer, that he will willingly bestow his strength, his time, his thoughts, and exert the most vigorous and active powers of his soul in endeavoring to confirm you for ever in the sentiments of virtue, to give you the most lively and affecting views of religion, of its free and generous principles, of its exalted aims, of its aspiring nature, of its animating consolations, of its glorious hopes, of its everlasting recompence. It is my chearful hope, that he will approve himself among you, as a "good steward of the manifold grace of God", that he will "rightly divide the word of truth";
that

Moral
Improvement.

Congratulation.

Return.

Appeal to
the World.

that "knowing the terrors of the Lord", he will by these endeavor to awaken the profligate and abandoned, the hardened and the perverse; that he will be the comforter of the afflicted, "an instructor of "the foolish, a teacher of babes" and a faithful, humble, serious monitor to you all. I hope likewise, that the present solemnitie will be the means of fixing it deeply in your remembrance, that you are, on your part, to give him all possible encouragement by a regular attendance upon his ministrie, by entring cordially into his interests, and by suffering him to have as little molestation and disturbance as may be, on account of any worldly or temporal affairs; that so he may be "wholly given "to the work of an evangelist." Permit me likewise, upon this occasion, to remind you of your dutie in allowing him to deal with you freely and impartially for the correction of whatever he apprehends to be your errors, your imperfections, your follies, or your vices. I might have mentioned it; as a still farther advantage attending a solemnitie of this nature, that it serves to bring the eye of the world, and of your fellow christians more directly upon you. And thus it furnishes you with an additional motive to all possible circumspection and vigilance in fulfilling the mutual duties of
that

that important relation, which is to subsist between your minister and you. Good men will grieve to see these duties either totally forgotten or but very negligently discharged. And bad men will make it the matter, if not of reproach to you, yet of encouragement to themselves in their profaneness and impiety. But, above all, let me entreat you to remember, that the eye of God is upon you in your present transactions; and that in all your future assemblies, and throughout the whole of your future conversation, he will be an intimate, infallible witness, either to the formalities or the sincerities of your devotions; either to your progress in religion, or to the decline of it in your souls. Let the noble ambition therefore of approving yourselves to the best, the greatest, the most exalted of all beings, the infinite, eternal majesty of heaven, who will be the everlasting rewarder of them, that sincerely seek him, animate and inflame your souls. "And
" be ye steadfast and unmoveable al-
" ways abounding in the work of the
" Lord; for as much as ye know, that
" your labor shall not be in vain in the
" Lord."

Concluding
Exhorta-
tion.

**SUPPLEMENTAL
THOUGHTS.**

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SUPPLEMENTAL

THOUGHTS

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SUPPLEMENTAL THOUGHTS.

IT is here proposed to introduce some farther illustrations of a few particular points, insisted upon in the preceding discourses, and apprehended by the author to be of high and very considerable moment.

§. I.

He is not unaware, that what is said in the first of them concerning a partie spirit may be objected to by some as trite and unnecessarie. But he is firmly persuaded, that, notwithstanding all that has been done towards exposing such a spirit, it is very far from being eradicated out of the christian world. And he remembers, that saying of Epicurus well worthie of being attended to; *nunquam nimis dicitur, quod nondum satis discitur*. He is far from considering this spirit, mere-

Partie-
Spirit.

THE CHRISTIAN MINISTER.

Comparison
of it with
the Spirit of
Religion.

ly as a theoretic absurditie. Neither does he look upon the violation of the external order and beautie of the church as its worst effect. But he considers it, as a monstrous and devouring worm, like that we read of in the history of Jonah, that is continually impairing the branches, wasting the root, and exhausting the vital sap of practical religion. Indeed, there are no two things whatever more opposite or contradictorie than the partie-spirit, and that of religion. Religion is calculated to ennoble and elevate the mind; a partie-spirit to sink and to degrade it. Whoever indulges it, enslaves his own soul, and lamentably retards her flight towards the perfection of virtue. The spirit of "pure and undefiled religion" is generous and enlarged; but the partie-principle, in the very nature of it, narrow and contracted. Nay, it even disposes a man to envie those useful qualities in others, which he has reason to believe will never be employed in subserving the particular views to which he has thus fondly attached himself. And what more contrarie to every sentiment of religion or more subversive of its influence upon the heart, than this malignant, envious spirit, the exactest image and verie temper of the devil. Religion tends to simplify the soul,
reducing

reducing all its aims and purposes to the one grand principle of love to God and man. Whereas the partie-spirit cannot be prevalent in the mind, without introducing there a multiplicitie of bye ends, sinister views and corrupt designs. And "will the factious," to adopt the words of Dr. Lucas, so pertinent and just, "cross the interest of his party to promote that of his God, I mean that of religion in general". See the fifth of the Doctor's twelve sermons preached on several occasions, which, by the way, is one of the best in almost every respect, that I ever remember to have read. But where, I go on to ask, where is that denomination of christians, whether established by civil authoritie, or not, in which this dividing, schismatic spirit has not in fact a very pernicious influence. With respect to particular persons in each, they are too apt to conclude that, because it is not by them carried to the same height, as by many others, or does not in them assume the same form and aspect precisely, as in the maxims and conduct of many others, therefore they are wholly free from it. For which reason it is here humbly recommended to any one who shall be disposed to make the objection above-mentioned, carefully to consider, whether he

Present
Influence.

Different
Aspects.

THE CHRISTIAN MINISTER.

himself may not be a person standing in need of the admonition objected to.

§. II.

STUDIE.

The author is likewise very sensible, that in that indolent, and worse than laodicean state, that cold extreme, into which even the best professors of religion amongst us are now generally fallen; in an age, of which it is with so much more lamentable propriety, than of that, to which the observation originally refers, to be affirmed, that "all seek their own, none the

Self-denial.

"things, that are Jesus Christ's;" the scheme, which he has laid down, of ministerial studies, with what he has advanced concerning the self-denial, industrie and resolution incumbent upon a christian pastor, may appear to many visionarie and chimerical. We can verie readily urge

Recreation

in behalf of any particular and favorite amusements, that recreation and pleasure are to a certain degree innocent and allowable. But, I fear, we seldom make that other reflection, that it is at least equally allowable to abridge ourselves, in particular circumstances, and for the sake of a greater good, than could other ways be effected, of those, that in another situation, we might perhaps innocently and lawfully enjoy. We are surely at libertie, as says the pious Herbert, to "pass this right
" away,

“ away,” and may, in those other words, which we meet with in the little poem of his I refer to, and intitled, *The Rose*, venture to address our friends without fear of offending God, though not perhaps without offending them;

“ Press me not to take more pleasure
 “ In this world of sugred lies,
 “ And to use a larger measure
 “ Than my strict and welcome size.”

And certainly, if there are any men in the world, who ought to be content with a very moderate share of it's joys, ministers must be they. Their office requires from them incessant pains, and peculiarly demands it of them, that they be eminent examples. “ *Idem suavor & auctor consilii ero*”, as the Roman general in Tacitus expresses it, must be their language too. Not that they alone are to be “ patterns of good works.” Their people are to shine as well as they, and even to outshine them, if they please. In this respect there ought to be between them a continual strife. And yet it is sadly to be feared, that there is oftentimes in this relation a mutual encouragement taken to a very great neglect on both sides of the several obligations they lie under. Some

Minister.

Example.

of a ministers hearers may possibly be glad, that they have something to say, or at least something to think to the prejudice of his religious, or moral character; that so they may, as they imagine, be the more effectually excused from paying any regard to his admonitions. And, on the other hand, a minister may too readily indulge himself in a remission of his labors, on account of the inattention and indolence of his people, and their indisposition to make a proper improvement of them. Too readily, I say; for nothing can justly disengage him from the duties naturally belonging to his office, so long as he continues to stand in this connection with them. Nor is there any thing unnaturally hard or severe in that plan of industrie and application, which we have already supposed to belong to the duties of it. I know it to be often urged, that "much studie is a weariness to the flesh;" and thus is Solomon's authoritie made use of, in order to deter us from the imitation of his example. For he himself was a close and indefatigable student. "Much studie is a weariness to the flesh"; and what, if it is? what was the flesh made for; but to be worn out in some useful and honorable employment? The husbandman's occupation is likewise a "weariness to the flesh". So is the plowman's. But must

Plan.

must we therefore have no plowing and sowing? It was a noble answer given by that truly great and heavenly man, Mr. Philip Henry, from whom I have the honor of being descended; it was, I say, a noble answer given by him to some of his friends occasionally urging him to allow himself some rest from the labors of his ministrie; for they understood the nature of his office better, and had a better relish for its views than to be often insisting upon the topic. "It is time enough," he replied, to rest, when I am in my "grave." And is it not indeed better "to spend and be spent" even, till breath will hold out no longer, in the service of God, and in promoting truth and virtue among men, than to suffer mind and bodie both to corrupt and rot in indolence and sloth? It is worthie of remark, that our blessed Savior, "wearie as he was," when he "sat down upon the well" at Sychar; did not on that account, decline the labor of preaching the gospel to the woman of Samaria. and how happy were the consequences that ensued! What says the above cited divine Herbert in his poem styled, *The size*;

"A christians state and case
 "Is not a corpulent but a thinne and spare,
 "Yet active strength; whose long and bonie face,

Content and care

THE CHRISTIAN MINISTER.

“ Do seem equally to divide

“ Like a pretender, not a bride.”

Surely then the christian minister's ought not to be greatly different. There is something much to our purpose here recorded of Mr. Lamb, a Citizen of London. “ He was often advised and pressed to go “ into the country for his health's sake ; a- “ gainst this he urged many scruples, which, “ tho' they appeared not to others of suf- “ ficient weight, yet he could never bring “ his mind to it ; what shall my poor then “ do, said he, (referring to the many of that “ class, who were daily sharing in his “ compassion) it is even best for me to die “ in my station and employment ?” And would there be any impropriety in such language, when coming from the mouth of a gospel preacher ?

Soldier.

The christian minister is by St. Paul compared to a soldier ; not to a soldier, loytering in his tent, but actually engaged in battle. And the battles of his country a soldier, we know, is oblig'd to fight, even at the immediate peril of his life. Is a minister, then, to be terrified from discharging the duties of his office by the fear of shortening his days ? Yet, after all, a man may studie a long time, before he studies himself to death ; as by many illustrious.

lustrious examples may appear. In the mean time it is greatly to be wished, that some others would studie themselves into life. But, if at length death should be indeed the consequence of a faithful and diligent exertion of ourselves in the service of religion, and for the welfare of immortal souls, can we die in a better cause? may we not then welcome our dissolution, and say, o glorious death! "o grave, where is", where can be "thy victorie" over a mortal bodie thus descending into thy dark and gloomy mansions? For my own part I solemnly declare, that I would rather die at fortie, with a consciousness of having endeavored to improve my time to some valuable purpose, than linger out an indolent, thoughtless and inconsiderate life to the age of Methuselah. Even the christian life in general we must allow to be one of great labor and industrie. "Christianity, says Dr. Horneck well, is no " idle calling, and they that stroak themselves for being christians, and sit with " folded arms and yawn, and stretch themselves upon their couches, have learned " their divinity of the devil. *Work hard* " is the christians Motto, and there is nothing implies a greater contradiction " than idleness and christianitie." See his *happy ascetick or best exercise*, p. 299, 300.

Minister,

A book, well deserving to be read by every man, who would know what it is to be a christian, and how he may become so. In proof, likewise of these observations, the third of Dr. Barrow's excellent discourses upon Industrie may with the greatest advantage be perused. But if such are the obligations of christians in general, the christian minister cannot surely with any decorum of character be an idle man. Let us reflect only upon the almost incredible pains, that have been taken, and fatigues, that have been undergone, by some of the greatest enemies societie ever had, such as Alexander, Mithridates, Cæsar, and other slaughtering heroes, in order to gratifie their extravagant and impious ambition. And then let us ask ourselves, whether it must not be a thing infinitely shameful in a christian minister to grudge any labors, that may conduce to the accomplishing more completely the ends of his office; an office intended for the highest good of mankind, and by its friendly influences reaching into eternitie itself. On these topics, both the obligations of ministerial industrie, and its perfect consistencie with the ease and nappiness of our bodilie life, upon the whole, hear what Bishop Burnet excellently observes in his *pastoral care*. "If ministers," says he, had but the spirit of their calling

“ ing in them, and a due measure of flame
 “ and heat in carrying it on, their labor
 “ in it would be rather a pleasure to them, Pleasure
 “ than a trouble. In all other professions,
 “ those, who follow them labor in them
 “ all the year long, and are hard at their
 “ business every day of the week. All
 “ men that are well suited in a profession;
 “ that is agreeable to their genius and in-
 “ clinations, are really the easier and the Easier,
 “ better pleased, the more they are employ-
 “ ed.” And most certain it is, that he,
 who cares for doing no more in the dis-
 charge of his ministerial office, than what
 his indolence may suggest to be absolute-
 ly necessarie, will find a much greater dif-
 ficultie even in doing that, than another
 who is willing to “ abound in this work
 “ of the Lord”; who is continually
 feeding and replenishing his mind with
 knowlege, and constantly endeavoring to
 enlarge his views both of human dutie
 and human happiness. But we have
 still greater authoritie to urge. And to
 those, who are inclined to ask; wherefore
 all this toil and labor, we are readie to
 answer in the words of St. Paul. And they
 must, as he himself expresses it upon another
 occasion, be “ worse than infidels”, if
 they do not take it for an everie way suf-
 ficient answer. Those memorable words
of

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of his, we refer to, which are recorded, 1. Tim. iv. 12, 13, 14, 15. "Let no man despise thy youth: but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charitie, in spirit, in faith, in puritie. Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. Neglect not, the gift, that is in thee, which was given thee by prophesie, with the laying on of the hands of the presbyterie; meditate upon these things, give thy self wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear unto all."

The proprietie and meaning of these precepts have been well illustrated by several authors, whose writings and sentiments upon this head, it would be of great use to us, who are employed in the sacred services of the ministrie, familiarly to converse with, in order to the having our minds impressed with a just sense of the nature of our office, and the pains, that must be necessarie to the discharging of it with fidelitie. Such treatises, I would be understood to speak of, as Mr. Baxter's *Gildas Salvianus, or, reformed pastor*; the Archbishop of Cambray's *dialogues upon eloquence*; Rapin's treatises upon the same subject, *The art of preaching* by the late professor Fordyce; together with those very ingenious performances of his brother, the present Mr.

James

James Fordyce, intitled, *The eloquence of the pulpit; and; edification by public institutions.* Some very striking observations on this head from Quésnelle we likewise meet with in Dodd on the parables, Vol. III. p. 411—14. of his very useful and well-adapted discourses on the miracles, as well as parables of our Savior. Here too I gladly remind my brethren in the ministrie of two little pieces, that may with the greatest advantage be familiarised to the mind of the christian preacher. They are, memorials of Godliness and christianity by Herbert Palmer, master of Queens-College, Cambridge, and that choice, invaluable treasure, “left under the hand-writing” of Mr. Corbet of Chichester, and intitled, *Self-employment in secret.* Nor can I excuse myself from refering also to Mr. George Hamond’s *Good Minister of Jesus Christ.* It is a book written with the greatest plainness imaginable of style and language, but yet with so much power of truth, and force of conviction, as has rendered it extremely entertaining, acceptable, and I hope, useful to myself. And I venture to recommend, it not only to the perusal, but intimate familiaritie of every minister. It would be worth his while to get it by heart. But by all means let the sentiments of it be deeply engraven upon his mind

Apostolic
charge.

Awful.

Indispens-
able.Contrarie
Suggestions;

mind, as they appear to have been upon that of the worthie minister, Mr. Richard Steele, whose death occasioned that discourse. "The charge, says this writer, "which the apostle gives, is terrible as a clap of thunder." The 2 Tim. iv. 1, 2. is the place he refers to. "I charge thee before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead, at his appearing and his kingdom, preach the word, be instant in season, out of season, reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long-suffering and doctrine."

We may observe too with respect to this charge given to Timothie, as well as that, which has been already cited, and others of the like kind addressed to him by St. Paul, that they were thus peremptorily insisted upon, notwithstanding, the frequent infirmities of bodie, which that apostle well knew him to labor under. And farther, let me ask; are these gospel precepts, or are they not? is a gospel precept to be regarded, or is it not? is it the truth of God, or is it not? You answer affirmatively. away then with all your suggestions of ease and indolence to a minister; away with them even down to hell, their only proper seat. "Ye gentle Theologues"; to borrow the poet's words,

"Ye

“ Ye gentle Theologues of calmer kind,
 “ Whose constitution dictates to your pen,
 “ Who could yourselves think *ardor* comes
 from hell,”

Whence.

judge not my language harsh. I am justified by the highest authority in deriving rather this coldness thence. When St. Peter would have dissuaded our blessed Lord from going up to Jerusalem on account of the sufferings, that there awaited him; what was the Savior's reply? why “get thee behind me Satan.” The apostle spoke from no worse motive than a false and childish tenderness for his master's bodily ease and safety, yet no gentler answer did he meet with from him, who was “meek and lowly of heart.” And undeniably certain it is, that after all the most candid allowances, that can be made for the reasons which may induce any one to dissuade a minister from diligence and application in the studies and labors of his function, we must necessarily impute it to a sad defect of charity and christian zeal. Is it possible, that a parent in his senses, and justly concerned for his son's prosperity and advancement in the world, should seriously recommend it to him, not to apply himself in earnest to business, but to lead a life
of

of recreation and amusement? how then can any one that is duly concerned for the welfare of souls, and has his heart inflamed, as it ought to be, with a desire of their eternal happiness, make it the matter of his grave and reiterated advice to a minister, not to be laborious, not to exert himself in the duties of his calling, or apply himself chiefly to them, but to be perpetually unbending, and diverting himself with the vanities and toys of life? In giving such advice he may have no formed design of obstructing the interest of religion and the happiness of mankind. But did the spirit of religion operate in due manner, and with its proper force upon his own mind, he could not do it even without design. In suggesting such considerations to a minister, he is in realitie persuading him to betray the interest of souls, the cause of truth and of God. And can it be any excuse for him, that for want of being himself sufficiently warm and fervent in these infinitely great concerns, he is not aware of this? If any one is really acting a part fit only, for the grand enemy of souls to act, as our savior so clearly has intimated to have been the conduct of St. Peter in the case already spoken of, does he stand acquitted, merely because his own solicitude for the welfare of mans immortal spirit

is

is so little, as not to put him upon thinking what he is about? It was perhaps on account of this defect of the religious and moral temper in those, who would have deterred St. Paul from going up to Jerusalem, by the pre-apprehension of the persecution, which, it was foretold, would befall him there, a defect so plainly implied in the very plea itself, as well as of its contrariety to what at all adventures he himself was resolved upon, that he expostulates with them in those remarkable words equally animated with the heroism of the martyr and the tenderness of the friend. "What mean ye
" to weep and to break mine heart, for I am
" readie not to be bound only, but also
" to die at Jerusalem for the name of the
" Lord Jesus" Acts xxi. 13. And the like language may the faithful minister in more quiet times address to those, who, endeavor to alienate his mind from his ministerial labors whatever may be their view or meaning in it. In the case of one, who is conscious to himself of taking a devout and generous pleasure in them, I know not any thing, that is more likely to "break his heart." He cannot but be sensible, that his advisers, whatever they themselves may think, or whatever they may really intend, are, in fact, acting the part of enemies to others souls, and even seducing him to neglect
the

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the salvation of his own. For what says the apostle to the christian minister. His words are surely, beyond measure, awful and momentous. For they are, as follows: "Take heed unto thyself, and unto thy doctrine, continue, in them, for in doing this, thou shalt both save thyself and them, who hear thee." Is not the danger in not "continuing" to do so sufficiently intimated by this solemn charge? I will add too, that the tender monitor is little aware, what an injurie he may be doing by his own expostulations, accompanied with others of the like kind, even to a minister's bodily health; the very topic from whence he draws his plea. To a minister, who has no relish for the employments properly belonging to his office, you need not address any persuasions to refrain from them. But to one, that is duly sensible of their importance, who finds, who feels himself to be in his element, when pursuing them, and whose heart is entended by an ardent affection to immortal souls, what can be more fatiguing or oppressive than incessant remonstrances against them? what would you have him do? He is willing to oblige you, if he can. But then, as Mr. Hamond, in the discourse above mentioned, well expresses it, he cannot, but "feel himself obliged to be studious

“ous and industrious”; obliged by the most sacred, inviolable, awful ties; obedience to God, and fidelitie to man. And let me ask those, who, upon any consideration whatsoever, can allow themselves in endeavoring to dissaude or divert a minister from the labors of his function, or interrupt him in pursuing the duties of it, a few such questions, as follow. do they know, that he is to “watch for souls, as one that “must give an account?” do they know, that if he is found to have been negligent in this important charge, their “blood will be required at his hands?” are they willing to take upon themselves, and in his stead, the curse, the dreadful curse, he must necessarily incur, if, for the sake of pleasing them, he gives himself up to idleness and levitie? Or supposing him to be their own minister, do they think, that he is on that account bound to gratifie them, even tho’ he verily believes, nay, tho’ he certainly knows, that in doing it he must offend his God? is the creature-will to carrie it against that, which is sovereign and divine? Permit me however, with all due deference, to intreat those, who may at any time find themselves disposed to address the christian minister in the language and after the manner we have now been specifying, that they would at least interrogate their
their

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their own hearts upon the motives of their conduct? We have already seen, that, at best, it must be owing to some defect in the religious and moral temper. But may it not possibly procede from an almost total indifference to everie spiritual concern? or may we not grudge at what we secretly believe to be the growing excellencies of another? or does it not afford some kind of perverse satisfaction and unnatural ease to our minds, to have our own light and trifling manner of passing time kept in countenance rather than reproved by the example of a minister? or, finally, have we not contracted even that antipathie to the power and vital spirit of serious godliness, as disposes us both to please and to pride ourselves in vilifying and deriding, or, by any other method, that art and subtilty may suggest, opposing and counter-acting those, who would gladly be its abettors in the world? The world, I perhaps, never wanted such more than now. This at least may, I think, be with truth affirmed of that part of it, which ought to be especially dear and pretious to us, our native land. How is its wonted glorie tarnished? how is that vigor or soul, with which religion once inspired its generous and heroic sons, dissipated in pleasure, and lost in effeminacie? what an absolute contempt

tempt of the really religious character, and the truly virtuous and upright temper, is daily disclosing itself in every rank and order of men amongst us, and with increasing effrontery? how few even of those, who profess religion, are here to be excepted? how difficult is it to know the member of a christian church from another man; unless, when you actually see him at the communion? And is this a time for a minister to relax his studies, or abate the ardor of his zeal? is he not now rather loudly called upon to redouble his vigor, exerting every nerve and facultie, every wish and passion of his soul in the cause of truth and pietie, of his countrie, and of his God?

“ A christian sure (*'tis said*) with eager strife

“ Shou'd be ev'n prodigal of life,

“ And covetous of pain;

“ And with the heroic martyr crie,

“ Can I but once for Jesus die?

§. III.

But should this our apologie in behalf of the labors and studies of a christian minister be deemed after all insufficient, how shall we stand excused, with some at least, for having in the preceding discourses, and in this our supplement, ventured to hint at the obligation, that even his hearers lie under to be at some pains in the studie of

DUTY of
Mankind
in general
relative to
the STUDY
of RELI-
GION.

G

religion?

religion? I know the answer, that many will have at hand, by which they hope with the greatest facilitie to evade it. Truly, say they, we have no time to spare for any such employment of our thoughts. And there are others, who will demean themselves so far, as to urge, that they have not even a capacitie for it; tho' they

Objection. would not, I believe, take it very well in another, who should gravely tell them so.

Answer; and Illustration of the argument at large. But there are two or three considerations to be offered in replie to whatever may in this way be alleged, which I will here with all submission propose, sincerely wishing that they may have that attention given to them, which, if there be any weight in the most venerable authoritie, in the most sacred maxims relative to the right conduct of human life, in certain, undeniable truth itself, they must needs deserve.

Time.

And, in the first place, with respect to the want of time; may I presume to ask, how it is that you spend your time? Perhaps whole hours of everie day in unneccessarie sleep, or even in such a superfluitie of it, as may not be a little hurtful to your bodilie health and strength; in sauntering and loytering; in vain, unprofitable musings, in frivolous and impertinent visits, in gluttonie and feasting, and in the most trifling and insignificant conversation. Now, what if

if these three or four years, which the whole may perhaps at least be thought to amount to, of your lives had been faithfully and in due manner devoted to the serious contemplation of religion, and inquiry into its principles, think you not, that, in such a space of time, you might have attained to a very good proficiency in the knowledge of it? or if God should lengthen out your life to old age, may you not still, according to this manner of computation, notwithstanding the dreadful waste you have already made of its never to be recalled hours, be able to redeem as considerable a portion of it for the uses we have been specifying? With what propriety then can you urge the want of time for employing your thoughts upon the subject of religion; specially, as so much less, than what we have been mentioning, will in this case very competently suffice? or what kind of excuse, think you, will it be at the bar of heaven, and in the judgment of the great day, for your neglect in that matter, to say; "Lord, I was so taken up with indulging my sloth and drowsiness, in dressing and feasting and visiting, in prating, and speaking evil of my neighbors, that I had not a moment's leisure for the studie of thine holy will." But

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perhaps you will say, no; you are far from spending your time in such a manner, but that still you have none to spare for making religion any part of your deliberate inquirie, being wholly taken up in the affairs of your worldly calling; and you know Sir, that must be attended to. I know it must. And yet, perhaps, the true meaning of what you urge amounts only to this; that you emploie as much of your time, as you think necessarie, in your worldly occupation, and providing for the support and maintenance of your familie, and then rather chuse to trifle away the remainder, no small portion, it may be, of the whole, than emploie it in the manner we have been recommending. But, give me leave to remind you, that worldly business is not the only business you were sent into the world for. You are not therefore at libertie, supposing that has been sufficiently attended to, to spend as you please the overplus of your time. Or if you mind it so closely, as to have no overplus at all, you then mind it a great deal too much. This will appear sufficiently evident from a second consideration, which we proposed upon this subject to suggest. For it is no other than this, that the exercising and employing our thoughts in religious and moral contemplations

Rule of
Christianitie
in the case.

plations is an obligation incumbent upon all in general by virtue of the plain, explicit doctrine of the new testament upon this head. In proof of this some passages have been already produced in our observations upon natural religion and christianitie, &c. p. 90. And to these we will now add a few more. "Be not children" in understanding, says St. Paul, addressing himself to the Corinthians. 1. Ep. xiv. 20. In like manner runs his exhortation to the Ephesians chap. v. v. 8 and 10. "walk" as children of the light—proving", that is trying or examining, "what is acceptable to the Lord." To which we will here subjoin only that apostolical injunction, with which St. Peter closes his second epistle. "But grow in grace, and in the knowlege of Jesus Christ." And it is observable, with respect to these several precepts, not only that there is no limitation of them to any particular person, or order of men, but that they are in fact enforced alike upon all the members in common of those christian churches, to which the epistles themselves are respectively addressed. And when St. Paul informs the Ephesians of his praying for them, that "the eyes of their understanding might" be enlighten'd," and tells the Philippians, that this was his prayer for them, that their

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"love" might abound yet more and more
 "in all knowlege, and in all judg-
 "ment," tho' this language be not direct-
 ly preceptive or exhortatorie, yet does it not
 evidently imple in it an obligation incum-
 bent upon the members in general of those
 christian churches to cultivate their "un-
 "derstandings, and be continual aiming
 at the improvement of their minds in re-
 ligious and divine knowlege? This ex-
 tent of the obligation may likewise be just-
 ly infered from the injunction so frequent-
 ly to be met with in the epistles of St. Paul
 upon the members in common of those
 churches, to which they are severally directed,
 of another dutie; I mean that now discarded
 one of religious conversation. According to
 the view, that is given us of this dutie
 in these writings, it implies not merely
 our making now and then some cursorie
 and incidental reflexions upon the subject
 of religion, the entering into occasional
 conversation upon it, or the observance of
 some set particular seasons for discussing it,
 but the having the general bent and tenor
 of our discourse impregnated by its sen-
 timents and spirit. But how is it likely
 that the dutie should in any of these bran-
 ches be complied with? what inclination
 can there be to it, or what abilitie for
 it, when the mind is void of religious know-
 lege;

lege; nay, prejudiced against it, and even strongly averse to it? When therefore it is injoin'd upon the christians in general of those primitive times that their "speech be seasoned with grace; that so it may minister grace to the hearers," that it be "good to the use of edifying; and that we exhort one another daily, while it is called to day, lest any of us should be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin;" there must needs be another obligation of an equally extensive nature in these very precepts implied, even that we have here been urging, the personal examination and studie of religion. But if it was then incumbent upon christians in general, must it not be so now? and if it be an incumbent dutie, must it not be a practicable one? or shall we, rather than be at the pains of complying with it, or of overcoming the aversion we have unhappily contracted to the doing so, charge the apostles, and even our Savior himself, with having acted the absurd, ridiculous part of promulgating laws impossible to be observed? To vindicate them from such a charge, which is often in effect brought against them, even by christians themselves, as well as designedly urged by the rejecters of the gospel. I here add still farther, that the practicabilitie of them, in perfect

Practica-
bilitie of
that Rule.

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consistencie with the necessarie occupations of life, is abundantly evident from real fact and frequent experience. This, let the lives of a Hale, a Tryon, a Firmin, a Bonnel, all of them engaged in secular affairs, and some in those of the highest importance, that secular affairs can have, and applying themselves to them, with all possible fidelitie, yet cultivating their intellectual powers in the studie of religion, with the greatest industrie and success. Other examples of the like kind might easily be produced. We might particularly instance besides, in the above mentioned Mr. Lamb. Of him we are told, that “ he was richly furnished
 “ with scripture knowlege. He had treasured up the richest portions of divine
 “ writ, he had digested them into nourishment and strength, and he was grown
 “ so familiarly acquainted with them, that there was no doctrine of faith, or duty
 “ of practice, for which he could not readily urge several the most pertinent texts
 “ of scripture, and not only cite the words, the chapter, the verse, but give a very
 “ rational account of the spirit and design of them, and of their coherence with the
 “ context.” It is remarked likewise of the same person, that, “ he was wont to
 “ place all religion in three things, contemplation, adoration and imitation.” After long experience,” indeed, “ his soul,”
 “ it

" it seems, " was grown weary of fruit-
 " less speculations and barren controver-
 " sies, and his meditations" afterwards
 " wisely confined to these excellent sub-
 " jects, the purity and holiness of God,
 " the riches of his love and goodness to
 " mankind manifested in Jesus, and the
 " blessedness of a future state." " Into
 " which last" we are told " he was" to-
 wards the close of his life " more parti-
 " cularly and industriously inquisitive."
 Should any be inclined to ask ; how being
 a tradesman he found time for contempla- Tradesman.
 tions of this sort, they will be very suffi-
 ciently answered by the two following par-
 ticulars recorded of him. The first is a
 rule or maxim, he laid down for traders.
 Which was this ; " that they should care-
 " fully avoid the grasping and avoiding so
 " much business, as should make their
 " trade encroach and entrench upon their
 " religion." And if Mr. Tryon, a man of
 indefatigable application to business, is to
 be depended upon for his judgment in the
 case ; " nine hours in twenty four are
 " sufficient for labor or work, be the art
 " or trade what it will. The rest, says
 " he, of thy time, thou shalt employ in
 " good conversation, meditation and wor-
 " ship". See certain principles, maxims
 and laws annexed to his life, p. 108. max-

im 28. That in this latter clause he should omit the mention of those charitable and benevolent offices, to the more vigorous and affectionate execution of which all our meditations ought to be ultimately directed, was far from being owing to any defect of the charitable or friendly temper in himself, or to any low opinion entertained by him concerning the importance of such a temper. He expressly speaks of it as being "one of the most binding

"and fundamental precepts in the christian religion" and the first true "step to

"all virtue." See his Miscellanea, p. 162, 3. Of his own charitable disposition we find very particular and honorable mention made by the continuator of his life, p. 66. —9. And in truth the very omission we speak of may be traced up to it. In his writings he communicates whatever he thought conducive to the welfare either of soul or bodie with that precipitancie and absolute contempt of order, as plainly enough appears to be the effect of such a freely flowing and luxuriant benevolence, as could by no means submit to the restraint of any literarie rules. The other particular we refered to in the life of Mr. Lamb is as follows.

"All trifling and unprofitable communication was a burden to his soul, and

"therefore it was that his conversation

" was

“ was reduced within so narrow a compass, that he had very few confidants and intimates, and very little company besides that of his near relations and the poor.” See the sermon preached upon occasion of his death by Dr. Lucas. But to the honor of the fair, let me mention here, in farther illustration of our present argument, the Lady Brooke and Mrs. Ratcliffe. The former, Relict of Sir Robert Brooke, of Cockfield-Hall, in the County of Suffolk, “ looked well” to the affairs of her familie. Yet she found time to compose several books upon the subject of religion, emulating, as it were, the great Hanibal himself. “ Hic tantus vir, says the historian, tantisque bellis districtus nonnihil temporis tribuit literis, namque aliquot ejus libri sunt græco sermone confecti.” vid. Corn. Nepot. p. 183. Ed. Glasg. The latter, “ tho’ competently careful, frugal and provident,” in her domestic concerns, “ in which her” own “ hands, as we are told, were good assistants;” and tho’ she “ readily descended to such homely offices, as were meetest for the meanest of her servants”; yet “ became in her studie and knowledge of the holy scriptures, and in the most sound and useful points of religion, an excellent proficient.” Inasmuch that Mr. Ley,

Fair Sex.

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Prebendary of Chester, who preached her funeral sermon in the cathedral there, she being a citizen of that place, and widow of Mr. Ratcliffe, an Alderman of the said citie, and divers times its representative in parliament, "desired her," for his own use to write down "her observations upon the Bible, as she read it in her constant course." See her life published by that Gentleman, p. 25, 6. 43. and 82. and 133, 4. See also, the life and death of the Lady Elizabeth Brooke, by N. Parkhurst, p. 47, 8: 50. 80, 81. Justly then, said Seneca, Epist. 62. "Mentiuntur, qui sibi ob stare ad studia liberalia turbam negotiorum videri volunt." which in plain and downright English we may render thus. "They lye abominably who pretend, that they are necessarily engaged in such a multiplicitie of worldly affairs, as to have no time for applying themselves to the more generous occupations of religion." By the way, that very short letter, of which these words are the begining, short as it is, has much in it, that is worthie of being attended to by all, but especially by those employed in the ministerial function. In support, however, of our general argument, we may here add the observation made by the learned Mr. Jortin in his ingenious discourses concerning the truth of the christian

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tian religion. " The ignorance, he says
 " p. 218-19, of some people, in matters
 " of religion, is *astonishing*, and the only
 " plausible excuse for it, namely, want of
 " capacity, or want of leisure, is often
 " *shamefully* groundless : for the know-
 " ledge required of every person cannot
 " be greater than his abilities, and the a-
 " bilities of many persons are greater than
 " they think. The understanding must be
 " exercised before its strength can be
 " known, and by exercise it may be im-
 " proved beyond imagination ; and as to
 " leisure, there are few even of those, who
 " are engaged in a laborious way of life,
 " who have not many hours, which are a
 " burden to them, or are consumed in a
 " manner that hurts their souls and their
 " bodies." To which very just and use-
 " ful reflections we may not unaptly sub-
 " join the following from the analogy of
 " religion natural and revealed Part II.C.VI.
 " p. 337, 8. octavo. " Farther : the gene-
 " ral proof of natural religion and christi-
 " anity does I think lie level to *common*
 " *men*," as the author somewhat too episco-
 " pally expresses it, but meaning I suppose
 " to mankind in general, " even those, the
 " greatest part of whose time from child-
 " hood to old age is taken up with provid-
 " ing for themselves the common conve-
 " niences,

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“ niences, perhaps necessities of life :
 “ those, I mean, of this rank who ever
 “ think at all of asking after proof, or at-
 “ tending to it. *Common men*, were they
 “ as much in *earnest* about religion, as a-
 “ bout their temporal affairs, are capable
 “ of being convinced upon real evidence,
 “ that there is a God, who governs the
 “ world : and they feel themselves to be
 “ of a moral nature and accountable crea-
 “ tures. And as christianity, he goes on,
 “ intirely falls in with this their natural
 “ sense of things ; so they are capable not
 “ only of being persuaded, but of being
 “ made to see, that there is evidence of
 “ miracles wrought in attestation of it,
 “ and many appearing completions of pro-
 “ phecy.”

One consideration more let me still
 briefly insist upon in relation to this mo-
 mentous subject. For such we must
 needs esteem it, if we have any respect or
 reverence for the authoritie of our redeemer,
 and the maxims of his religion. This, from
 what has been already offered, must be suf-
 ficiently evident. But the particular con-
 sideration I mean is the vast importance of
 religious knowledge to all the purposes of
 human and social happiness. What an
 high opinion was entertained of its worth
 and value, even considered in itself, and ab-
 stractedly

The social
 influence
 and moral
 importance
 of religious
 Knowledge.

tractedly from its moral uses by one, who has long stood among the most honorably distinguished in the field of science, will appear from the following declaration:

“ I must profess to you, Lindamor, (as
“ unfashionable as such a profession may
“ seem in a gentleman not yet two and
“ twenty, that I find the study of those
“ excellent themes, God’s word and his pro-
“ vidence, so difficult, and yet so pleasing
“ and inviting, that could heaven afford
“ me no greater blessing than a clear ac-
“ count of the abstruse mysteries of divini-
“ ty and providence, I should value the
“ having my understanding gratified and
“ enriched with truths of so noble and
“ precious a nature, enough to court heaven
“ at the rate of renouncing for it all those
“ unmanly sensualities and trifling vanities,
“ for which inconsiderate mortals are wont
“ to forfeit the interest their Savior so
“ dearly bought them in it. Thus it is
that Mr. Boyle expresses himself in his
Seraphic Love. §. 24. p. 146, 7. As to the
“ difficulties here” referred to, we cannot
but apprehend them to have been somewhat
exaggerated by our highly ingenious youth;
when in the same treatise and section like-
wise, p. 144. observing that “ the calami-
“ ties” of human life “ are not only con-
“ sistent

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“sistent with God’s goodness, but *productive*
 “*ons* of it he adds ;” — “tho’ such a be-
 “lief do here to intelligent persons seem
 “perhaps a greater piece of *self-denial*, than
 “to refrain from wine, or gold, or mistres-
 “ses.” But be that as it will ; there is for
 certain a much greater connection be-
 tween the knowledge and practice of re-
 ligion than many seem to be aware of.
 Those, who have been most eminent for
 the latter, have ever been found good pro-
 ficients in the other. Till we all come,
 “says St. Paul, in words very expressive
 “of this connection,” in the unitie of
 the faith, and of the *knowledge* of the Son of
 God, unto the measure “of the stature of
 “the fulness of Christ.” And, indeed,
 how can we imagine, that the case should
 be otherwise. A man cannot be well-ac-
 quainted with the theorie of religion with-
 out being made deeply sensible of its practi-
 cal obligations ; obligations of the most
 awful, momentous nature, not to be trifled
 with, not to be suspended, or set a-
 side, by the customs of the world, the
 prejudices of his friends or acquaintance,
 any former habits of his own, or any diffi-
 culties whatever, that he may have to en-
 counter, but to be at all hazards, resolutely
 and peremptorily complied with. And, on
 the other hand, a man cannot have long
 injured

inured himself to the practice of religion, without having by this very means his heart inspired with the desire of being better acquainted with its theorie, that he may practice it still more perfectly. But where the knowlege of it is slight and superficial its motives must have a proportionably slight and unavailing force. "Truth," indeed, it has been said, and justly, "is the most powerful thing in the world." But how can they feel its power, who never contemplate it. It is nourishing and salutary to the soul. But how can they be refreshed or nourished by it, who have no appetite, no relish for, nay, will not so much as be at the pains to taste of it? And the very want of such an appetite, this very absence of all relish for the knowlege of religion may naturally be considered according to what we have now been insisting upon, as carrying in it no small indication of a mind not perfectly well-affected to the life and temper it prescribes. So that, if religion in the spirit and practice of it, or in its nature and consequences, be a matter of any importance to man, the knowlege of it cannot be a thing of small account to him, either as a means conducing to the production of its moral fruits in the heart, or as an object, the inclination and tendencie of our minds to which may happily implicate some

some degree of this very temper already possessing it. Among the several means of inspiring the heart of man with this virtuous temper, there are none, that can naturally be more efficacious than the public worship of God, and dispensation of his word. But how, as the author of the epistle to the Hebrews so well observes, can these solemnities "profit," if "not mixed" "with faith" in those, who attend upon them? And whence is this faith to be derived, but from some competent acquisitions made in the knowlege of religion? or how this knowlege to be acquired, but by applying ourselves to the contemplation and pursuit of truth? What constancie, what seriousness, what fervor can we hope to see in those, who attend upon the social exercises of religion, without ever having made the grounds and principles, upon which they are founded, the subject of their own deliberate and calm reflection; in those, who attend upon them, only because it is the custom of their countrie to do so; and who perhaps would have been altogether as well pleased, had custom authorised the reverse? or how can it be thought, that they should ever feel the force of those truths which in these ministrations are inculcated, be such truths in their own nature ever so powerful, weightie and interesting,

or

or be they in ever so striking and lively a manner exhibited, who have themselves never been conversant with them? In this case, even "the great things of the law," the sublimest, most momentous and elevated principles of religion, will be "counted" but, "as a strange thing." And tho' we "call our people to the most High," yet "none at all will exalt him." And accordingly it is worth our observing, that in that very prophecie, where this is the language of accusation on the part of God against the jewish people, they are complained of likewise because they "rejected knowledge." And "for lack of knowledge" it is there expressly said they were "destroyed." See Hosea viii. 12. iv. 6. xi. 7. Would to God, there were not so much reason, as there apparently is, for applying such language to ourselves! And is not this to be still more ardently and intensely wished on account of the peculiar danger to which we of this nation must necessarily be exposed, whenever the knowledge of religion shall come to sink among us into a general decay, of being once more over run with all the dreadful plagues and miseries of Poperie. What was it, that once expelled it hence, but the cultivation and love of knowledge? what is it that supports its cause, where still it triumphs, but the want of

of these? or what, for this obvious reason, is the grand engine of popish policie and dominion, but keeping men in ignorance and locking up the bible? But if we lock it up from ourselves, and thus become ignorant and regardless of its great contents, is not the danger of our going back to poperie the same in effect, as if the like events were to happen thro' the contrivance and management of others? Will not the popish missionarie, in this case, find the most difficult part of the office assigned him already done to his hands? Nay, shall we not without his assistance, could he be thought backward to afford it, be gradually contracting a stronger tendencie to poperie, and even affection for it, till, at length, and ere we are aware, we plunge intirely into its enormous gulph? And should there be any appearances of this kind in the present age, how is it likely to fare with us in the next? Are children likely to be instructed by those parents, who themselves "need" to be taught, which are the "first principles of the oracles of God?" and thus uninstructed at home, what improvement can they be supposed to make of any public means of edification, whether that of catechism, or of any other kind? How soon, in all probabilitie, will they come to abandon those religious exercises, of the meaning

meaning and ground of which they are wholly ignorant; and either give themselves up to absolute impiety, or become the easy prey of some insinuating popish sophist. Such it is said, there are among us, who are continually sucking the blood of this nation. And have they not too fair a prospect of draining off all of what is truly generous, that remains in it? Are not the apprehensions we have been intimating upon this head too strongly justified by fact? Is not a solid acquaintance with the principles of religion a matter of indifference with the most? Is it not by many treated with great contempt? Are there not those, who manifestly take a pleasure in prejudicing themselves and others against the very desire of it. And in some there is plainly enough to be seen even a high degree of enmity and aversion to it? Nay, the author of the *Essays on the Characteristics*, who has so delicately touched the "manners of the times;" and for our great comfort assured us, that we are not a people "*remarkably* corrupt;" that the real characters and manners of this "age and nation" is *by no means* that of abandoned wickedness and profligacy;" particularly, that "the pure administration of justice," as it regards private property is still left among us, and that an "*uncorrupt* spirit" is "diffused

“ diffused through the inferior courts” of law by the influence and “ example” of the highest; this author, I say, has not scrupled publicly to “ lament” the very existence among us of that religious libertie, by which only our knowlege of religion can be kept alive, and the want of some effectual remedie for the suppression of it. “ It must be acknowleged, he says, and *lamented*, as one of the unalterable *defects* of a *free* government, that *opinion* must have its course. The disease he adds, is “ bad, but the cure would be fatal.” We are sorry likewise to find the estimator expressing himself so *diminutively* and *doubtfully* concerning the influence of national virtue and vice upon national prosperitie and happiness. When about to “ muster the few remaining virtues we have left, to which, he says, *in part* it is owing that our misfortunes are not heavier and our decline more rapid.” Ought he not at least to have assigned them under God the principal share in this mitigation of our “ misfortunes?” So again speaking of the “ general causes,” of national prosperitie or ruin, he tells us “ among all these various causes, none *perhaps* so much contributes to raise or sink a nation as the manners and principles of the people.” See his Estimate of the manners and principles

ciples of the Times, p. 13. 17. 22. 23. 25, 6. 169, 70. As to his *lamenting* however so sincerely as he seems to do our *freedom of opinion* it is on one account not much to be wondered at. The great man to whom he offers such humble adoration had been before as unreserved in making light of religious libertie, as he himself is in bemoaning the mischiefs that are to be feared from its residence among us, even tho' in his friends opinion of so trifling a nature in itself. With the author refered to the Test-law, by which the progress of free inquirie and religious knowlege has been in these kingdoms so fatally obstructed, passes only for the "shadow of a grievance." And to those, who presume to differ in their religious sentiments from the "established church," of "which he" tells us, that law under a general toleration was the *only* security," he can vouchsafe no better a name, than that of "a sectarian rabble." See a view of Lord Bolingbroke's Philosophy, Letter the fourth, p. 79, 80. first edit. And now from the whole of what has in this section been advanced, may it not be well-infered, that a minister of the gospel should make it no small part of his concern very affectionately and warmly to recommend the duties of religious inquirie and rational instruction?

That

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That we might contribute in some measure to animate his endeavors of this kind amidst the many prejudices lying against them in the minds of our hearers, has been the sincere intention of the survey which we have now been taking of their natural importance, increased and heightened by the solemn, explicate sanctions of the gospel, and rendered so much the more interesting still by the peculiar circumstances of our nation.

And lest what we have offered concerning the capacities of mankind in general for a compliance with them, should, after all, be thought defective, let me here enforce it, and so conclude our reflections upon the subject, by the authority of the sagacious and accurate Quintilian. “ Falsa enim
 “ est querela, *paucissimis* hominibus vim
 “ percipiendi, quæ tradantur, esse concessam ; plerosque vero laborem ac tempora *tarditate* ingenii perdere. Nam,
 “ contra, plures reperias & faciles in excogitando, & ad discendum promptos :
 “ quippe id est homini *naturale* : ac sicut aves ad volatum, equi ad cursum, ad sævitiam ferae gignuntur : ita nobis propria
 “ est mentis agitatio atque solertia : unde origo animi cœlestis creditur. Hebetes
 “ vero & indociles non magis secundum naturam homines eduntur, quam prodigiosa corpora & monstris insignia, sed
 “ hi

“ hi pauci admodum, fuerit argumentu n,
 “ quod in pueris elucet ipes plurimorum,
 “ quæ dum emoritur ætate, manifestum
 “ est, non *naturam* defecisse sed *curam*.”
 Quinctil. Instit. L. I. §. I. p. 6. Edit.
 Gesner.

§. IV.

Another subject but briefly touched upon in the preceding discourses, is that of visiting. We may do well therefore to attend to what we find recorded in reference to this matter concerning Mr. Abernethy; whose life was as exemplarie, for all the virtues, which adorned it, as are his writings, for that exalted sense, which renders them, some of the most entertaining, useful and improving compositions, that we can possibly be conversant with. “ He, did not,
 “ we are told, go much into mixed company, when the business of his station did not call him to it; and often said, as conversation was generally conducted, he had little satisfaction in it. He therefore staid much at home, and applied himself to studie. This was not owing to any thing sour or unsociable in his temper. For he had a taste for conversation, and was of a chearful, as well as of an affectionate, spirit, but to a persuasion, that much of the time spent in company, was lost, at least might be

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“ much

“ much better employed; and that, when
 “ a habit of passing time in a trifling man-
 “ ner was contracted, it must have bad ef-
 “ fects upon the mind, unbending it too
 “ much, and begetting an indolence, by
 “ which men were rendered averse to ap-
 “ plication, and in some measure incapa-
 “ ble of it. He thought, that of all men,
 “ ministers had most reason to guard a-
 “ gainst this; as it was more particularly
 “ their duty, always to preserve the mind
 “ in an aptitude for the best exercises, and
 “ avoid every thing, which had a tenden-
 “ cy to dissipate the vigor of it; observing
 “ likewise, that where the taste of the
 “ company was such, that they could not
 “ manage conversation, so as to render it
 “ worthy men of sense and good affection,
 “ that dignity of character, which they
 “ ought always to maintain, must suffer by
 “ it.” Such was the sense of this truly
 great man upon this article. And yet
 there are those, who seem to think, that a
 minister is the properest companion, of all
 others, for such as have nothing to do.
 They look upon him, as a kind of a su-
 pernumerarie, always to be applied to and
 sure to be engaged, when one is want-
 ing to make up a partie of pleasure: as if
 it was his only business, or at least that
 most important one to which he is to make
 every

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sation.

everie thing else give way, to be a perpetual dangler in all the trifling amusements and idle pastimes of his friends and acquaintance. But "let no man" have reason to "despise" us for these things. Let us not be the cheap and easie companions of those, whose vain and frivolous humor, if we suffer ourselves to be so, even though we ourselves should not be corrupted by their example, of which however, there is the most imminent danger, will at least, be kept in countenance by ours. It is indeed not at all unlikely, that we may by this means expose ourselves in some measure to contempt. For there are those to whom nothing makes a man more acceptable, than his graciously condescending not to be one jot wiser or better than themselves; nothing more unacceptable than the contrarie. If he will be very complaisantly content to be as ignorant and as idle, as trifling, and as insignificant as they, he is sure of their good word, and of being not a little carested, as a friendly, sociable, good-natured man, upon the slight consideration only of resigning his own understanding and better taste, for the sake of playing the fool with them. But should he haply be one, that deems this not to be a consideration of so slight a nature, he brings upon himself at once their abundant scorn,

soon comes to be looked upon as a strange, wild, fanatical fellow, that knows not what he would be at. But “ things being as they are, so an ingenious writer expresses himself, it follows, that they, who aim at order in themselves, *must* act in *opposition* to the general disorder.” If they give way, they are carried down with the current ; if they resist in good earnest, they must suffer.” See Letters concerning the religion essential to man, p. 64. And with respect to ministers in particular, it is a maxim highly worthie our attention, which we meet with in an excellent little book, entitled the Principles of Christianity, written by Bona, author of that admirable treatise, a Guide to Eternity. “ Then a Clergyman,” says he, in the first of these now mentioned pieces, Part I. Article XLII. “ Then a Clergyman ought to hope, that he has some measure of holiness, when men hate and despise him.” And he there produces the highest authorities in support of his maxim. “ If ye were of the world, the world would love his own, but, because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore, the world hateth you,” John xv. 19. But, si sapiis, as Seneca says well, mala opinio bene parta delectat.

§. V.

The topic of pastoral admonition, likewise, Admonition having been but very slightly insisted upon in the preceding discourses, it will not perhaps be amiss here to introduce an observation or two upon it. There are then two methods of giving admonition, or administering reproof; the mild and gentle, which aims at accomplishing its end by insinuation and artificial address, by the softest and most obsequious terms, and, as it were, imperceptibly and unawares, even to the very persons themselves, whose fault or error we would correct; the other direct and full to the point, plain, blunt, and undisguised. The former is, for the most part, spoken of with the highest applause. But of the latter, there are those, who clearly enough express their preference by their general practice, at least, upon such occasions. And yet the truth of the matter is, that they are both of them to be made use of, according to the different temper of the several persons who are in this manner to be addressed, or the different stages of guilt and follie in one and the same. St. Paul has aptly specified both, in saying to the Corinthians; "shall I come unto you with a rod, or in the spirit of meekness." And both of them we find to be fully justified, not only by his example, but by his

Different Modes of it exemplified and authorised.

express precept and injunction in the case. He that so gently rebuked the remissness of Archippus, and with so many of the insinuating arts of tender and mild address reproved that spirit of faction, which had so unhappily disclosed itself in the Corinthian church; with what severitie of language did he expose the crimes of Elymas the sorcerer? Nor did he scruple, upon the just occasion given to "withstand" even St. Peter himself "to the face." If he advises Timothie to "instruct in meekness those, who oppose "themselves;" he recommends it to another christian bishop, that he should "rebuke" them "sharply." Exactly to the same purpose, is the rule laid down by St. Jude. "And of some have "compassion, making a difference; and others save with fear," "pulling them," instigated by the imminence of their danger; without ceremonie or formal apparatus, "out of the fire." Of both these kinds of admonition, likewise there are not wanting specimens in the conduct of our Savior himself. What irresistible conviction did he once convey into the heart of his disciple, St. Peter, by the power only of a tender, expressive look. Of St. Peter, that very disciple, whom, upon another occasion, he branded as we have seen with the name of Satan. With what delicacie of reproof, did he

he even compel Simon the Pharisee to own the rashness of the censure he had passed upon the woman, whom he had suffered not only to anoint, but even to kiss his feet? how gently does he blame the too carnal mind of Martha? Yet at other times, with what severe, plain, undisguised freedom of speech, does he inveigh against the pride, hypocrisie, and extortion of the pharisees, whom his forerunner too, John the Baptist, accosted in language not at all more complaisant than that of calling them "a generation of vipers." It is, however, to be remembered, that there are offenders to whom no admonitions at all are to be addressed, otherwise than in the general course and order of religious duties. Such a dreadful insensibilitie have they contracted to the sentiments of religion; and so much do they even value themselves upon being able to withstand the force of them, that they are equally incapable of being benefited by any mode of admonition whatsoever. Nay, in all probability, you will by attempting their reformation in any such way, only harden them the more in their perverseness. Hence, that caution of our Savior's, "not" to "cast our pearls before swine, lest they trample them under foot, and turn again and rent" us. Hence, that rule by him so expressly and distinctly

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distinctly prescribed, and which we have recorded at large, Matt. xviii. 15, 16, 17, “ Moreover, if thy brother shall trespass “ against thee, go and tell him his fault be- “ tween thee and him alone, if he shall “ hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. “ But, if he will not hear thee, then take “ with thee one or two more, that in the “ mouth of two or three witnesses, everie “ word may be established ; and, if he “ shall neglect to hear them, tell it to the “ church ; but, if he shall neglect to hear “ the church, let him be unto thee as a “ heathen man; and a publican.” Agree-
 able to which rule, of our Savior’s, is that apostolical injunction, which we meet with in the epistle to Titus. “ A man, that is “ an heretic, after the first and second ad- “ monition, reject, knowing, that he, that “ is such, is subverted, and sinneth, being “ condemned of himself.” Such is the
 characters, which the apostle gives of an heretic, of one, who delights in spiriting up factions, in sowing the seeds of contention, cherishing animosities, raising, and abetting divisions, and alienating the minds of fellow christians from each other, whether on a religious, or any different account. He sins against the perpetual remonstrances of his own conscience, which, instead of complying with, he takes the utmost pains to get

Heretic.

get the better of, by contradicting them. It cannot therefore be imagined, that he will give much attention to any further admonitions of ours. It is remarkable enough, likewise, upon this subject, that throughout the whole gospel-historie, we never meet with any particular expostulations, or reproofs, addressed by our Lord to Judas, that ungrateful hypocrite, who "betrayed his master with a kiss;" tho' we have several instances of the kind, with relation to some others of the twelve. What we find recorded, John xii. 4—8. is so far from being an exception to this remark, that it rather illustrates the truth of it. For, tho' Judas is the single person there objecting to the conduct of Mary in pouring out the precious oil upon the feet of Jesus, yet our Lord's replie is addressed to the disciples in common, without the least notice taken in particular of the objector himself. Our Savior speaks of him, as occasion offers, in terms, futing what he knew to be his real character, calling him, a "son of perdition," and a traitor, and representing him, as "having a devil." But, he knew him too well, to think, that any particular exhortations, or advices, in whatever manner conveyed, could be of the least avail, towards effecting his reformation. Rather than encrease his guilt, therefore,

Judas.

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therefore, by giving him an opportunitie of despising the soundest means of repentance, he leaves him to the full scope of his obstinacie and wickedness. And this, as it should seem in imitation of the divine providential conduct itself, as represented in the style and language of ancient prophetic. "Ephraim is joined to idols, let him alone." Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt more and more." The substance then of our dutie upon this head, cannot perhaps be better expressed, than in the words of the pious Kempis. Imit. Christ, L. I. C. XVI. "Si quis semel aut iterum admonitus non obtemperat, noli cum eo contendere, sed *rem totam* Deo committe." With the highest proprietie, surely, are we in such a case directed to refer ourselves wholly to our God. For to a generous mind, there cannot, perhaps, be a greater instance of self-denial, than that of withholding those admonitions, which we cannot but see, could they be at all available, to be so peculiarly requisite, and that even, it may be, where our affections are with the utmost tenderness engaged.

§. VI.

In the foregoing pages notice is taken of two extremes, which the members of our christian societies are apt to fall into

into in their attendance upon the public assemblies of religion. That which relates to the discourses delivered in such solemnities, seems to be most common in those, that are conducted, according to the method of our established worship. And to this it is in a great measure owing, that preaching is come to be, in so many of our churches, a most insipid, trifling and insignificant performance, in which neither head nor heart appear to have the least concern. The other, that of looking up on the services preceding the sermon, as being little more than a customarie, formal introduction to it, is, we presume, most frequent in our dissenting audiences. And in consequence of it the enlivening and exalting spirit of free prayer has been verie much cramped and restrained, and the objections, we may fear, that are made to it, not a little encouraged.

§ VII.

In relation to what has been already offered concerning that freedom and impartialitie with which the principles and doctrines of religion are to be inquired into, by the minister specially; it was not the right of doing this we so much designed to insist upon, as the obligation to use it. How else shall he inculcate it upon others? And yet it must be owned, that a minister lies

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lies under some considerable temptations, not to use this glorious privilege so freely as he ought. Let him instead of flattering the prejudices of his people, soothing their errors and imperfections, and indulging any indolence of mind in relation to their religious and moral concerns, into which they may have unhappily fallen, endeavor, on the other hand, and in the simplicitie of his heart, to correct these errors and imperfections, to improve their judgment, mend their passions, and exalt their taste, scarce any thing more likely than that by this very means he may incur their displeasure. So that, if he would do them any real good, he must be content to do it in spite of themselves. Besides, notwithstanding the utmost impartialitie of his inquiries, if he happens after all to differ in his opinions from those that are the generally received ones, he runs the greatest hazard of being reproached, censured and condemned for not being impartial, and of having this his difference of judgment imputed to some of the worst of motives. And yet one would think it no great stretch of charitie, for one, who is himself conscious of an unbiassed and upright mind, tho' differing from another in point of faith, to suppose, that another may be conscious of the same, tho'

tho' differing from him. With respect to one very famous article of controverſie, that, with ſo much opprobrious zeal, has been agitated in the chriſtian world, there is, methinks, ſomething highly candid and pacific as well as extremely ingenious, in what we find inſiſted upon by Mr. Boyle in his ſeraphic love, p. 104. of that book, and §. 17. Speaking of the calviniſts and remonſtrants, he expreſſes himſelf as follows.

“ And even in honoring the ſame attribute [of God,] his goodneſs, theſe adverſaries ſeem rivals, the one party ſuppoſing it beſt celebrated by believing it ſo ireſiſtible, that, to whomſoever it is intended, he cannot but be happy, and the other thinking it moſt extolled by being believed ſo univerſal, that it will make every man happy if he pleaſes; the one party electing to honor free-grace by aſſigning it (as to men) an unlimitedly-vaſt extent; as the other does by aſcribing it an infallibly victorious degree.” To balance however the inconveniences and dangers we have been ſpeaking of, let it be remembered; that nothing can be more delightful to a miniſter himſelf, or a worthier employment of his time, than this free ſpeculation of religion. For certainly upon due conſideration of the matter it will appear that Lord

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Bacon was not far wide of the truth, when he said concerning truth itself, as follows, and as it occurs in the first of his essays. "The inquiry of truth, which is the love-making, or wooing of it, the knowledge of truth, which is the presence of it, and the belief of truth, which is the enjoying of it, is the sovereign good of human nature." Most certainly it is so; when the sovereign truths of nature, the truths, I mean, of religion, are not only inquired after, known and believed, but well and firmly adhered to in temper and affection. Add to this, that it is impossible for us to determine, and yet dreadful to think, how great may be the mischief arising from our having through the whole course of our ministrie, and for want of sufficient diligence and freedom of inquiry, instilled into the minds of our people corrupt and vitiated principles of religion. It is likewise to be recollected here, that when a minister preaches from his own clear and full conviction of the importance of the truths he inculcates, which can only arise from a close inspection and personal examination of them, this will communicate such a force and ardor to his services, as will render them inexpressibly more pleasant to himself and useful to his people than can otherwise be the case. Can we then

then, upon the whole, do better than deeply to impress upon our minds, what Dr. Leechman so well recommends to our consideration, in that admirable sermon of his; The character of a minister, accompanied with another equally excellent upon the nature, reasonableness and advantages of prayer? "If we allow, says he p. 49. of the first of these discourses, the impressions of God and religion to wear out of our peoples minds, by our careless or indifferent manner of instructing them, several generations may pass away before they can be renewed. If we sow the seeds of folly and superstition among them, through a blind mistaken zeal, it may take the labors of wise and good men for several ages to root them out. May not that long train of mischiefs, which takes their rise from our negligence or misguided zeal, be justly charged upon us? if we either neglect to instruct our people or mislead them, can we be free from the blood of the present or succeeding generations? Upon these principles we may venture to affirm, that even that freedom of speech, which borders upon rashness, is much to be preferred to that prudence, which is scarce to be distinguished from hypocrisy. And, what tho' it should create us enemies? The faithful, minister can,

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in that character, have none but those that are the enemies of God" as well as his. A consideration that may well abate his astonishment both at their number and perverseness. A consideration too, that ought at once to quicken his zeal and confirm his patience. For dreadful surely, beyond expression dreadful, must be the condition of those, who are in a state of enmities with God. And happily may we think ourselves employed, while endeavoring, even tho' with very faint appearances of success, to "pluck them, as brands out of the burning." They are, I have said, the "enemies" of God, as well as ours, and how does he treat them? does he not "bear long with them"? are not we then to do the same? what, if they insult and affront us? do they not act the very same part towards the eternal God of the universe? what, if they turn a deaf ear to our admonitions, do they not in like manner despise even divine threatnings and exhortations? what, if they make the most ungrateful returns for all our "labors of love?" do they not ungratefully forget even the God, that made them? Let us then with cheerfulness and courage go forth to the warfare that has been appointed us. Let us "be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might." Let the love of virtue, the love of God and religion, the love of Christ
and

and our peoples souls, continually animate & inspire ours; assured, as we are, that, if we thus "lawfully" and according to the conditions of the combat, "strive for the masterie," we shall ere long be "crowned." I have often thought, that there is something particularly emphatical in that expression of the apostle, to which it may so naturally be expected, that we, as ministers, should be giving the most attentive heed; the "not being ashamed before Christ, at his coming." It seems to intimate that we should aspire after such elevated height of attainment in moral purity, and christian integrity, as that we may hereafter appear with some degree of "boldness" and confidence," even "before" Christ himself, that "holie, harmless, immaculate "Lamb of God."

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